

Save cash,
impress your
love

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Veggies the antidote to Festival banquets

See whether a bowl of chrysanthemum
tofu soup can bring you closer to Samadhi.



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Improv a lesson in life skills

Most come to relieve pressure or practice English, but the
young Beijingers who hang out at improv groups are seeing
many more positive changes in their lives.

Great cultures reflect each other



There was only one problem when French painter Francois Boucher decided to
paint a Chinese wedding: he had never seen one. But such cultural misunderstandings
always bode well for art.

Zhou Bing's documentary *When the Louvre Meets the Forbidden City* expands on this
theme by juxtaposing two majestic museums to compare the cultures of the East and
West through their collected works.

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Delivery halt
a reminder of
dependence

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Post-Festival return sets records

By Chu Meng

Snow fell on Beijing for the first time this winter Wednesday as 120,000 passengers disembarked from Beijing Railway Station, the largest rail hub in the northeast.

They were part of the record 350,000 travelers who arrived at the city's four railway stations on Wednesday, the first working day after the seven-day Spring Festival holiday.

But as the snowfall across central China turned to sleet, both road and rail transportation became congested.

"I have never experienced such a big jam. Usually, it only

takes about 10 hours," said Sun Liping, who spent 14 hours traveling to the capital by train from Xi'an, Shanxi Province.

Returners waited in long queues outside Beijing Railway Station to enter the subway station or take a bus or taxi.

Beijing Traffic Management Bureau announced yesterday that the city's traffic volume had returned to the levels seen before the festival.

Wang Hai, an officer and spokesman for the bureau, said the great migration is expected to continue through the end of the month as students and migrant

workers from more traditional villages return after the first 30 days of the Lunar New Year.

Among the record number of returners are a number of Beijingers who spent Spring Festival abroad. Data released by the National Holiday Tourism Office on Wednesday showed that 67,500 residents left for overseas trips, a 60 percent rise year-on-year.

Those who went abroad were spending more this year. Prices of vacations to Hong Kong, Europe and the Middle East rose by 15 percent on average, and excursions to Thailand's Phuket Island and Saipan in the western Pacific

rose 30 percent.

About 40,243 people from the mainland traveled to Taiwan, a new tourism destination for mainland Chinese since 2010.

Hong Kong continues to be the most popular destination for outbound tourists, followed by Phuket, Singapore, Bangkok and Bali, according to a Top 10 list released by the China Tourism Academy and Beijing Ctrip International Travel Service.

On Wednesday, railway operators added a record 803 temporary passenger trains within a day to ease the transportation burden for migrant workers bound for

Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Guangdong.

The country's railway conveyed a total 106.63 million passengers during the festival, up 9.8 percent on the same period last year. It set a record for the national Spring Festival travel peak, the Ministry of Railways said.

"The Spring Festival transportation burden for Beijing and other big cities has increased consecutively for one decade. It has largely been the result of unchecked urbanization in cities and farming land transportation in agricultural provinces," Wang said.

Youth resettle for careers outside metropolises

While millions from the countryside continue to flood the capital in hopes of better education, better jobs and better lives, a rising number of burnt-out office workers are heading for smaller cities.

Most are degree-holders between the ages of 25 and 35 with a monthly income of 5,000 to 15,000 yuan. They come from the IT, administration, accounting and human resources sectors.

Experts said urbanization is the invisible hand behind the group's decision to leave.

Going home

Cheng Ding is keen to end his "seven-year itch" and leave Beijing once and for all for his hometown in Sichuan Province.

Following a failed investment that led to the closure of his own company in Zhongguancun, the 32-year-old mobile phone game producer gave up his dream of building a game empire based in the capital.

For Cheng, the incentive to return home is more than just financial.

"Career setbacks are one thing. More importantly, I'm longing for another kind of life — one with no rush, no rent and no pressure," he said. "Beijing is no longer the home of my dreams."

Cheng's feelings are pervasive among his peers. A survey conducted by China's leading online job hunting website Zhaopin.com in April showed more than 80 percent of 7,000 office workers in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou said they would prefer to work in a second- or third-tier city.

Rising living costs, pressure, pollution and crowded public transportation are the major causes of their anxiety, with escalating housing prices heading the list, the survey said.

"We believe some of those who said they would leave are taking actions," said Hao Jian, senior human resource consultant at Zhaopin.com.

Hao's conclusion is backed by the website's survey released last December on the online job applications in six major cities, showing the number of applications for positions in Beijing and Shanghai declining, while increasing in second-tier cities like Chengdu,



Many young people, with decent job and payment in Beijing are heading for smaller cities where they believe have more opportunities than here.

IC Photo

Wuhan, Chongqing and Nanjing.

Heading to second-tier cities

Zhang Zhanxin, a researcher at the Institute of Population and Labor Economics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, believes the figures indicate the human resources distribution in top-tier cities and second-tier cities, especially the provincial capitals, are adjusting.

"The signs are obvious as the second-tier cities are becoming increasingly attractive to talents," said Zhang, who studies labor force mobility.

He also noted that the move's short-term impact on big cities is "very limited," because "human resources go where capital goes."

"For the cities like Beijing, their traditional advantages in education and industries such as high-technology, information and finance, will keep them magnets for investment in the coming five to 10 years," he said.

Top-tier cities, namely Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, have been the favored destinations for degree-holders seeking a starting point of their careers since the state-controlled job assignment system came to an end in 1994.

Brand-name employers and

modern amenities are the main attractions for the youngsters.

After getting an invitation from a Beijing game company, Cheng rushed to the capital in 2003, convinced that the country's geographic capital was also going to become its gaming center.

His family also believed the capital had the best resources in every sector, and that it was the best place to live.

Cheng rose quickly from being a programmer to chief technology officer, and eventually, the boss of his own company.

He realized his "millionaire dream" when he sold the company to a Spanish investor in 2007.

But the happiness brought by career success subsided, as his feelings of belonging nowhere mounted and living costs soared.

Cheng moved six times, changed four jobs and opened three companies within five years, while family support seemed out of reach.

"I've never thought of owning my own flat in Beijing. The housing price now is more than 10 times what it was in 2003, and with the pollution, traffic crunch and general indifference among the people, this city isn't livable anymore," Cheng said.

In the fall of 2010, when the market collapse hurt his third company, Cheng realized it was time to say goodbye.

"I'm no longer 24. I've had enough experience and I'm not curious about the city anymore," he said. "It's time for me to go back to reality."

Hao Jian said Cheng is in the group of office workers most able to move: those who are degree holders between the ages of 25 and 35 with a monthly income of 5,000 to 15,000 yuan.

"Their jobs are boundary-free compared to those working in the industries like finance or education, which are traditionally concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai," Hao said.

Second-tier cities also see less serious job competition. Zhaopin's survey showed an average of 36 job hunters competed for an IT offer in Beijing, while there were only 20 competitors in Chengdu.

Urbanization, an invisible hand

Xu Zhaoyuan, a researcher of urbanization for the Development Research Center of the State Council, said urbanization was the invisible hand behind Cheng's decision to leave or stay.

China has embraced urbaniza-

tion. Between 1950 and 2005, the national population shifted from 13 percent urban to 41 percent.

Data published in July by the McKinsey Global Institute, the San Francisco-based research arm of McKinsey & Company, suggests the pattern will continue, with the urban Chinese population expected to increase by 400 million by 2025.

"Most of the resources, from investment to talents, are being channeled into big cities as their populations swell. Second- and the third-tier cities are being left behind," Xu said.

Smaller cities have been facing intense pressure to attract and build an educated workforce and to create appropriate jobs for it.

Following the central government's Western China Development Strategy in 2000 and then the Rise of Central China Plan in 2004, inland areas have been given priority in financial support to balance the country's economic structure and narrow the income gap.

"As multinationals and leading native enterprises tap new inland markets with rich natural resources and cheaper labor, more jobs will be generated and there will be a new round of talent redistribution," Xu said. (Xinhua)

Microblogs spur national search for abducted children



Peng Gaofeng and his son
Photo provided by Sina.com

Lost boy's homecoming

Peng Gaofeng, 32, began crying at a police station in Pizhou, Jiangsu Province when faced with his son for the first time since the boy's abduction three years ago.

"The crying man is my dad," the little boy said.

This touching scene was broadcast live online. Several microblogs that followed the Peng case carried the stream on Tuesday.

"He's my boy. There's no mistake. He still recognizes me and knows how to speak our hometown dialect," Peng said.

His son, Peng Wenle, was kidnapped from Shenzhen on March 25, 2008, and the family has been trying to find him ever since.

Vowing to find his son, Peng turned his small store into a search center for the child, offering a reward of 100,000 yuan and distributing information about his son on the Internet.

"It's a miracle, a miracle that could not have happened without the help of netizens," the father said.

Peng said his friend published a photo of his son in late January on his microblog and received an anonymous tip on February 1 that an adopted boy in Pizhou resembled the missing child.

Peng's son is believed to be the first missing child to be reunited with his family thanks to a campaign launched by netizens on microblogs at Sina.com on January 25.

Microblog campaign

The man behind the campaign, Yu Jianrong, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said he was prompted to act after he got a letter from a desperate mother whose child had been abducted and who turned to him for help.

Using his microblog, Yu urged netizens to take photos and post them on microblogs in hopes that children reported missing may be recognized and rescued. The posters must show the face of the child beggar and explain where and when the photo was taken.

"You may change the life of an abducted child by taking a simple action," Yu said.

The public response was nothing short of amazing.

In less than two weeks, Yu's microblog attracted 150,000 followers, including many of

By Han Manman

A seven-year-old boy kidnapped three years ago was reunited with his father Tuesday after an unprecedented online campaign to rescue children who had been abducted and forced to beg.

Netizens called it a miracle of the Internet age.

The outcome rekindled hope for many parents whose children have vanished as victims of trafficking.

While many applauded the campaign's achievements, others have raised concerns about the number of child beggars who have vanished since having their photos published. Some speculated that the missing children had been hidden, disfigured or killed.



Child beggars are forced to beg for money by their captors.

IC Photo

the country's most influential celebrities.

More than 1,200 images of children begging have been put on the site. So far, six trafficked children have been identified and the Ministry of Public Security has begun helping the lost children find their families.

These pictures could be vital clues in helping track down children who may have been missing from home for years, Yu said.

One picture shows a half-naked girl lying on the ground in Sanya, Hainan Province. Her clothes are dirty and the holes in them revealed numerous wounds.

Other pictures of lost or missing children from the country's charity websites have been posted so that they can be compared with those of children found on the streets.

Some children, according to the online posters, are sold to beggars for between several hundred and several thousand yuan, depending on their physical condition. Damaged children fetch higher prices as they attract more sympathy.

"Giving money to those beggars does not help the children, as their greedy abusers just use it to buy more kids. Taking photos may have a better effect and may scare off the traffickers," one netizens said.

Netizens' help not enough

Peng's case has rekindled hope for many parents who have seen their children disappear as trafficking victims and also encouraged more netizens to participate in a social campaign.

Zhang Zhiwei, a lawyer and volunteer with the non-government organization Baby Come Home, said the rapidly expand-

ing campaign shows that microblogs are exerting an increasing influence on society.

However, he emphasized that such online activity needs to be better coordinated with government departments and professional NGOs because the flood of photos will be useless without professional sorting, analysis and comparison.

"There are also potential risks taken by volunteers taking photos and the children who are photographed," he said.

One of the concerns is the safety of participating netizens and abducted children, as the human traffickers may try to take revenge using vital information scraped from the Internet, Zhang said.

"Those people who are manipulating the kids might kill them if they are scared of being caught. With all these photos online, who can say who all is looking at them?" Zhang said.

In fact, many child beggars have already "vanished" from the streets of Shenzhen and Changsha since having their photographs published, some microbloggers said yesterday.

Zhang said the government needs to take a more active role in the search for lost children, and that netizens should report their clue to police instead of putting the photos online.

Still, the campaign has been widely supported by officials from the Ministry of Public Security, as well as the country's legislators and political advisers.

"We've noticed the online campaign and appreciate it," said Chen Shiqu, director of the ministry's office in charge of investi-

gating human trafficking.

Chen said his office has urged local police departments to follow up on clues posted on the microblogs.

Chi Susheng, a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), and popular singer Han Hong, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), contacted Yu and expressed their interest in submitting a proposal to ban child begging and punish human traffickers during this year's NPC and CPPCC plenary sessions in March.

Child beggars are common in major cities, where they are forced to beg for money by chaperoning adults who are not their parents. In some cases, abducted children are sold to couples who cannot have children or who prefer boys, but many also end up in positions of slavery.

Government statistics show that there are an estimated 200,000 children abducted every year.

Between April 2009 and September 2010, the government launched its first crackdown on trafficking, rescuing 5,896 abducted children, breaking up 2,398 criminal gangs and arresting 15,673 people.

It recently established a database of 130,000 DNA samples taken from parents and children in an effort to help reunite broken families. It has, so far, matched 813 children.

More than 600,000 children across China are still missing, with thousands of parents desperately trawling the countryside for more than a decade in search.

Officials eager to regulate Web PR

By Zhang Dongya

"The online shuijun harms society and has disturbed order on the Internet," said Wang Chen, director of State Council Information Office. His comments were the central government's first condemnation of the PR phenomenon.

Wang said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the State Council Information Office are currently investigating to find a way to regulate shuijun interference on the Web.

The shuijun, often translated as water army, consists of hired netizens who help distribute propaganda and build and destroy images on the Web for pay. It has attracted the attention of many major media groups that are now appealing for the government to crack down on the PR machine.

Research by Beijing Network News Supervision Center shows that despite PR expanding to the Chinese Internet only several years ago, more than 6 percent of PR activity targets the Internet directly. More than 50 percent of the posts on several famous commercial websites and forums are created for pay by shuijun.

Most recently, the battles between dairy giant Mengniu and its rival Yili, as well as the war between Internet giants Tencent and 360, are reported to have been instigated through propaganda spread by shuijun.

The Tort Law, which took effect last July, may offer some hope for those looking to regulate PR. It holds both Internet users and Internet service providers who "encroach on civil rights" liable for their Internet use.

"To enforce the law is most important. The difficulty in fighting shuijun lies in identifying them and obtaining evidence. Lone members of the shuijun can't do much, but when organized by a PR firm, their effects can be catastrophic. It will be most effective if we can take down the organizers, the PR firms," said Yin Fuqiang, a lawyer at Long'an Law Firm in Beijing.

"Internet users also have to enhance their own 'media literacy' and learn to treat information they get online with suspicion," he said. "They need to take time to question content before spreading rumors."

China's Internet population broke 450 million last November. More than 34 percent of Chinese citizens are regular users of the Web, surpassing the global average of 30 percent.

Express delivery boom halts for festival

By Chu Meng

It was the day the delivery man did not come.

In the days before Spring Festival, online shoppers panicked after 90 percent of Taobao's stores stopped taking orders. But it wasn't just Taobao: almost all of the Web's other top retailers began denying orders.

In 2010, online business propelled China's parcel delivery sector into the world's top 10 fastest growing industries for the first time ever. But the sudden interruption in service has made it clear just how fragile the new business is.

Parcels pile up at the sorting center of EMS, the largest state-owned delivery company and the only one that did not stop during the festival. CFP Photo



A week before the Spring Festival holiday, Zhang Sisi, a 26-year-old "online shopaholic," struggled to cram all the stuff she had purchased on Taobao into the trunk and backseat of her Volkswagen Beetle.

"I felt really anxious when I heard many store owners would suspend order acceptance, though only for two weeks," she said.

Zhang said she once spent more than 3,000 yuan during a five-day Taobao shopping spree. "I felt my addiction clearly when I had to go seven days without shopping," she said. "I think I have Taobao Syndrome."

Companies short on labor

Taobao stores stopped accepting orders and delivering goods at the beginning of the month. Some other online outlets kept going until four or five days before the festival.

Online shoppers were forced to stock up on everyday items before delivery services stopped.

"My store stopped sending goods to most regions 10 days before Spring Festival. It was not because I intended to take a break. I had to halt deliveries because the company we cooperate with stopped accepting parcels," said Tang Jinu, a Beijing-based seller of cosmetics on Taobao.

She said orders to her store increased 20 percent as the festival drew near, but the increase was offset by the delivery suspension.

The effects may persist for another week, as many delivery agents are migrant workers from less developed provinces where Spring Festival celebrations are more elaborate and extended.

Xu Yong, chief analyst at China Express Delivery Consulting Network, blamed the current labor shortage on uneven development. "Big cities rely on these migrant workers to a large extent."

"If China, whose online business has been booming faster than anywhere else in the world, fails to seize this opportunity to develop its own delivery industry with a solid global network in the next five years, it will lose its competitive edge."



The world's largest delivery company is applying for a domestic parcel license. Justin Sullivan/ Getty North American/ CFP Photo

Xu said New Year purchases on Taobao are growing. In 2009, Taobao sold 280 million yuan of merchandise during spring festival. Last year, it sold 1 billion.

The poorly-organized delivery system is quickly becoming a bottleneck.

Domestic express not competitive

Deliverymen come and go very frequently, especially around the holidays, Xu said. The turnover rate of employees in some companies reaches 50 percent because many workers are just temps.

Some individual sellers on Taobao chose to send goods via the State-owned EMS, which is much more reliable and continues during the holidays, but charges twice as much as private agencies like Yuan Tong Express and Shen Tong Express.

Hong Kong-based S.F. Express, a big name in the delivery industry, said it would operate during the national holiday and would charge an additional 10 yuan per item.

Another major player, Yuan Tong Express, said last month that it would be experimenting with nonstop operations this year. But during the holiday week and two preceding weeks, delivery time slowed from two to seven days.

A lack of social responsibility may have also played a role in the slowdown this holiday season.

On January 30, three days before Spring Festival Eve, the State Post Bureau issued new regulations that prohibited express delivery companies with valid business license from stopping operations during the holiday.

According to the Laws and

regulations of Logistics in China, any business suspension must be reported to the local postal authorities. Companies that fail to do so may be fined as much as 100,000 yuan.

Chen Lihua, a professor from the Institute of China Supply Chain and Logistics Management Research, said the express industry is a fast-growing sector. Since 2003, its growth has been ahead of that of the global economy as a whole.

"It is expanding particularly rapidly in the transitional and emerging market economies, particularly Latin America and China," Chen said.

Chen predicts the next economic boom will be in logistics, with civil parcel express delivery at the lead. The industry employs 2.75 million people worldwide and makes a significant direct contribution to the global economy.

"If China, whose online business has been booming faster than anywhere else in the world, fails to seize this opportunity to develop its own delivery industry with a solid global network in the next five years, it will lose its competitive edge," the professor said.

Foreign competitors taking action

Chen's fears are hardly groundless.

The world's top three delivery tycoons, TNT, DHL and FedEx, entered China's civil parcel market during the last few years by opening joint ventures or setting up China branches.

In December, United Parcel Service Inc (UPS), the world's largest package-delivery company, announced plans to obtain a domestic parcel license from China's State Post Bureau and to further expand its business in the country.

UPS Chairman and CEO Scott Davis discussed the issue with government officials during his one-week trip to China last month.

According to a Xinhua report, the Atlanta-based company spent a year preparing its application for the license before submitting it to the bureau in late September 2010.

UPS entered China since 1988 and did business for 16 years as a joint venture with the state-owned Sinotrans. In 2005, it acquired ownership of Sinotrans' international express operations.

In 2008, UPS opened an 840-million-yuan (\$125 million) international air hub in Shanghai, connecting China and other Asian countries with Europe, the US and the Middle East.

"China is an extraordinary import market for us," Davis said. The company witnessed a 50 percent year-on-year increase in parcel volume in China in the third quarter, while daily international volume rose 13.7 percent to 2.24 million units from 1.97 million units over the same period.

China's revised postal law in 2009 prohibited international players from operating in the country's letter and document delivery segment. However, authorities have permitted domestic package license applications from international companies such as TNT, DHL, FedEx and UPS since October.

Xu said he expects approved international companies to handle 8 percent of domestic express deliveries by 2015.

Mega-city dream or bust

Rumor of world's biggest city brings to light the concern of 'city diseases'

By Huang Daohen

A mega-city with a population of 42 million? A recent article from Guangdong Province calling for such a metropolis recently captured attention. Although local government officials dismissed this report as hearsay, it roused many people's anxiety about "city diseases" caused by urban construction.

Several foreign media services, including *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Time* and CNN, reported in succession that China was planning to create the world's biggest "mega-city" by merging nine cities to create a 16,000-square-mile urban area that is 26 times larger geographically than Greater London.

Authorities in Guangdong

denied the plan, which would have united nine towns in the Pearl River Delta.

"The reports were totally false. There is no such a plan," said Guo Yuewen, spokesman for the Communist Party's provincial committee.

Guo said the plan is only to strengthen the integration of the cities' public services and transport links.



Migrant workers pour into major cities like Guangzhou.
Xiao Xiao/CFP Photo

The third eye

Metropolises plagued by city diseases

Does a big city imply happier citizens? Tian Ming, professor in the School of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University, doesn't think so.

Tian said social issues like traffic jams, air pollution and cost hikes are prevalent problems in cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Tian called these problems city diseases.

The country has seen rapid economic growth during the past decades, and big cities have emerged as a large number of people pour in seeking opportunities.

Beijing, for instance, has been plagued by population growth. Statistics show that by the end

of 2009, the city's population reached 20 million, more humans than the city can handle.

With more people come more vehicles – 4.5 million by last count – and that worsens the city's traffic jams and pollution. The growing population also puts pressure on education, health care and energy consumption.

The country appears to be at

its peak of urbanization. Major cities like Hangzhou, Shanghai and Guangzhou suffer now from similar expansions.

Tian said the rapid expansion of a city won't increase living standards. "Houses become larger, bike paths narrower and public facilities more expensive," Tian said.

Referring to cutthroat prop-

erty developers driven by profit margins, Tian said, "People have forgotten for whom cities are built for."

Tian said metropolises should have two basic functions: one to spur the economy, and the other to give people good lives. "If the economic factor takes precedence, the standard of living will suffer," he said.

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Playing under the WTO

A review of the 10th anniversary of China's accession

China came under the world's spotlight last year as a leading emerging market. It attracted even more attention at the recent 41st World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, as 2011 marks the 10th anniversary of the country's accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

From transparency in government regulations to protecting intellectual property rights, the Chinese government has endeavored to live up to its WTO commitments.

But has it accomplished its 10-year promise? *Beijing Today* reports on the country's WTO commitments.



China is a major topic for the WTO in 2011. Director-General Pascal Lamy said the country's membership is a win-win deal for the whole world.

Fabrice Coffrini/IC Photo

Bigger investor on global market

The first 10 years of China's WTO membership has coincided with one of the country's fastest and best growth periods, and the next 10 years will involve more opening up, said Chen Deming, Chinese Commerce Minister at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

In the last decade, China cut its tariffs between 9.8 and 15.3 percent and opened more than 100 service sectors. The country's exports and imports were respectively 4.9 and 4.7 times greater than a decade ago. China became the world's second largest importer in 2010 and its imports in goods reached \$1.4 trillion, accounting for 10 percent of the world's total.

It has been one of the fastest and greatest periods of economic growth in China, Chen said. The country's GDP more than doubled, China's per capita income was \$800 in 2001 and rose to \$2,500 in 2009, lifting more than 200 million people out of poverty.

In addition, the country also attracted more than \$70 billion of foreign investment annually and 480 multinationals among the world's Top 500 have operations in China.

The domestic consumption market also increased by 15 percent annually over the past 10 years. That strong momentum will continue in the next 10 years as the country further opens its market, Chen said.

Promotion of international

investment by Chinese enterprises, more imports and bigger domestic consumption are at the top of the agenda for the country. The 10th year anniversary of China's WTO membership will be a new starting point for China's further opening, Chen said.

Chen believes that China's imports from the international market would surge and contribute more to world trade as a whole. He added that China had to accept more stringent conditions for its WTO accession. However, that has also helped China ward off some protectionist attacks, he said.

Chen said China regards multilateral trade as the foundation of any new rules and bilateral free trade agreements with other economies as a complement. The Doha talks should be recognized as an important part of the new rules and China, Chen pledged, will make all efforts to facilitate a breakthrough of the talks for a more favorable environment for the world's economic recovery.

Win-win solution

Pascal Lamy, director-general of the WTO, described China's membership as a win-win deal for China and the rest of the world.

"I don't think there is any question that China joining the WTO has been a very good thing for China and for the WTO and its members," Lamy said.

"In joining the WTO, China successfully underpinned a policy of what had been 20 years of progressive openness," he said.

Adherence to economic reforms through international commitments ensured that China would stay on the path of openness, he noted, adding that the policy has helped the country economically, politically and socially.

Lamy said China has done a "remarkable job" of reducing poverty, which is an important task for the country, along with registering double-digit growth, thus becoming the world's largest manufacturer and second largest economy.

Apart from enhanced market access with its trading partners and more equal treatment in global trade, WTO membership also has allowed China to gain access to the organization's dispute settlement system, Lamy said.

According to a WTO report issued in December, as the world's biggest exporter, China ranks first in receiving anti-dumping (AD) investigations, with 23 new investigations directed at its exports in the first half of 2010.

In recent rulings arbitrated by the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), China has won a poultry dispute against the US and a steel fastener case against the European Union.

Being a WTO member, "China would have a seat at the table as negotiations commenced on the trade rules for the 21st century," Lamy said, referring to the decade-long Doha round of global trade negotiations aimed at building the next generation trading system.

(Agencies)

Review of WTO commitment

Same bed, different dreams in financial services

By Huang Daohen

Foreign banks and their Chinese counterparts are sharing the same bed but have different dreams about the business opportunities and obligations in the field of financial services, said Chen Hongmei, economics professor at the Institute of International Economics in Zhejiang University.

Since its WTO accession in 2001, the Chinese government has carried out a series of reforms in the banking sector under General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) rules. It gradually opened up its financial sector to foreign investors and encouraged collaboration with foreign banks.

But Chen said the country's rapidly expanding financial market has led to conflicting expectations.

China is currently the second largest economy in terms of GDP volume, with an average 10 percent annual growth in recent years. Chen believes expanding customer deposits, extending credit card networks and commercial finance will become the most significant banking opportunities in the country.

But up to date, foreign banks could only bank with overseas customers and few Chinese

enterprises in major cities.

Chen said the ultimate problem is about ownership and control. "While the government wants overseas investors to do business through joint ventures with Chinese partners, foreign banks are eager to access the banking infrastructure and to develop new customers of their own," she said.

Other concerns were raised regarding the country's rules on insurance, securities and regulatory transparency.

According to a report filed by US and EU trade officials, in the field of insurance, the country's high minimum capital requirements for life and non-life insurance companies and branch approvals had restricted foreign companies' expansion in China.

The report said full market accession should be given to overseas financial institutes with the regard of the acquisition of Chinese banks by foreign institutions, credit card and electronic payment services.

But Chen said it still takes time for foreign banks to obtain controlling positions.

"Foreign investors have been seeing their access to the market significantly improved and their market penetration is deepening," Chen said.

Cities suffer service vacuum during Spring Festival

By Li Zhixin

When migrant workers return to the countryside to reunite with family during Spring Festival, the city's service industry comes to almost a complete halt. State companies are hardly able to recruit enough stable workers, no matter how much they offer.

Liu Xiaolu, who gave birth early last month, was frustrated by her inability to find a domestic worker before Spring Festival because her current one chose to return to Anhui Province to spend the holiday with family.

"I raised her salary and promised to triple her wages during Spring Festival, but she still chose to leave for her hometown," Liu said. "I had to ask my 65-year-old mother to come from Shenyang to help me."

Qing Ming, a restaurant boss, said: "Two cooks and six waiters in my restaurant all went back to their hometown before the festival, so my wife and I had to cook and wait on tables."

Li Zhangkun, a manager, planned to move to a new house before the festival, but the moving company he was going to use informed him that all movers had returned home in advance. Li had to ask his relatives and friends to help him.

Before and during the festival at the Andemen Labor Market – the biggest migrant labor market in eastern China – the number of job hunters dwindle rapidly even as demand for babysitters, milkmen, couriers, cleaners and deliverers remain high in demand.

According to statistics from Jiangsu Human Resources and Social Security Department, almost 92 percent of migrant workers in Jiangsu Province chose to return home during Spring Festival, which makes the city's service industry almost grind to a halt.



A local company recruits babysitters during the Spring Festival.

An Xin/IC Photo

Comment

Urban residents should prepare for labor shortage before the festival

It's only natural to return home during Spring Festival. It's not for nothing that people give up triple wages and travel long distances: they want to be with their families. Urban residents should be prepared to deal with this before the Spring Festival.

– Liu Xinyi, a health editor

Most jobs don't have strong appeal

Although young migrant workers integrate more easily into city life than older workers, it's still hard for them to take root in the city and establish themselves in society because their jobs are very unappealing, with few growth prospects. It's no wonder they take any break they can get.

– Li Xing, a public servant

Give migrant workers sense of belonging in the city

Many people may attribute the service vacuum to traditional customs of reuniting with family, but they ignore the barriers the city erects against migrant workers.

Although the service industry can't do without migrant workers, the city should allow them to work and live with dignity. Many migrant workers still feel alienated in the city due to the city's hukou system and restrictions on schooling and housing. The widening gap in wages, allowances and welfare are added roadblocks to getting them integrated in city life.

If you want them to stay in Beijing during Spring Festival, give them an incentive.

– Wu Xiaohong, an employee at a housekeeping service company

Provide more low-cost housing

The weeklong Spring Festival is the only time of the year migrant workers get to see their families, so they take advantage of it.

If migrant workers were able to move their families into cities, the service vacuum problem would be resolved. The government should create more low-cost apartments and make sure migrant workers get adequate subsidized housing.

In addition, the government should organize some collective events, such as a New Year's Eve dinner, or short trips for workers so that they feel comfortable living in the city.

– Liu Xia, a PhD student in sociology, Beijing Normal University

Fireworks – to ban or not to ban?

By Zhao Hongyi

Spring Festival always implies fireworks, which are set off from rural hamlets to urban metropolises across the country.

But fireworks cause injuries and damages every year. This year, fireworks have caused two deaths, 388 injuries and 194 fires in Beijing alone, according to the municipal statistics bureau. Nearly 6,000 fires have been reported across the country due to fireworks, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

Since the Chinese invented fireworks nearly 1,000 years ago, fireworks have always accompanied national holidays. But many are complaining that fireworks are too loud and create too much trash and too much pollution – not to mention are dangerous.

A growing number of people are advocating a ban.

The Chinese central government banned fireworks in the late 1980s and 1990s, but appeals to lift the ban became so strong that the government began allowing individuals to set off fireworks during festivals and within certain boundaries.



Fireworks cause injuries and fires every year.

Xu Yin/IC Photo

Comment

Ways to improve fireworks

Deaths, injuries and pollution are inevitable in our daily life; we should not blame the tradition of setting off fireworks. What we can do is make it better, such as regulating the amount of gunpowder used. Our government should also impose a higher tax on fireworks to discourage their use.

– Qiu Feng, commentator, New Beijing News

Tradition cannot be banned

We banned fireworks for more than 10 years, but that was overturned. It shows how resilient the tradition is. Fireworks have become a very important industry in China. If we ban the tradition of fireworks, who will help those fireworks producers?

– Wan Ran, Beijing citizen

Expose ourselves to even more pollution?

Today, most Chinese cities, no matter big or small, are full of people, full of high buildings and full of pollution. City problems already cause big headaches; why exacerbate them with even more problems caused by fireworks during the holidays?

– Yang Jinwen, engineer, Energy de France

Learn from other cities and countries

The problem is easy to solve: don't let individuals play with fireworks, but rather, let groups be able to set them off at appointed times and places. That's how it's done in Taiwan, Hong Kong and many countries around the world.

– Wang Jun, professor, Peking University

US online open courses find Chinese enthusiasts

But why can't Chinese universities duplicate the model?

A meaningful holiday

"Suppose you're driving a trolley and at the end of the track are five workers. You try to stop, but your brakes fail. You feel desperate because you know that if you crash into them, they will all die. Suddenly, you notice there is a sidetrack at the end, with only one person working. Your steering wheel works. What's the right thing to do?"

Wu Menglin, 27, a Beijing native, posed this age-old philosophy question to a group of friends. She had just finished a popular online video called "Justice: What's the right thing to do," taught by Michael Sandel, philosophy professor at Harvard University.

"This is a case about morality and justice," Wu said.

Wu spent her holiday staying in and watching open courses, such as lectures about death by Shelly Kargan, the jeans and sneakers-clad professor at Yale; and "Positive Psychology," given by Harvard's Tal Ben-Shahar.

The inspiring and lively teaching style of American professors was refreshing to Wu, who has grown tired of China's system that emphasizes test results.

"I never thought topics like death and humanity could be a subject taught in a university class," Wu said. "Those online courses are excellent, the professors are humorous, the topics are interesting and the delivery is fun."

"I wish I could go to the US for college. Their way of teaching and interactive discussion is ideal, I think, for learning."

Open course hot in China

Wu is among many open course fans in China.

On social networking websites such as Renren, Kaixin and Sina, netizens have formed many study groups to share video resources and exchange opinions. Some have set up "free course groups" on these sites to discuss specific courses every day.

The Chinese portal 163.com has launched a special channel for open programs, providing more than 1,200 hours of free videos.

Courses range from social science to business management, and most of the students are office workers and college students who cannot afford to go overseas to study but still want to learn.

Wu said US open courses began to get popular in China last year thanks to the efforts of translators who provided subtitled for many of these videos.

Many fans have adjusted their daily schedule – many have quit taking afternoon naps – so they can watch these videos. Others download online courses to their cell phones and watch while commuting or whenever they have time.

MIT initiated the open course program in 2001, and it soon

By Han Manman

Ten years ago, when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) launched a series of free online lectures and courses aimed at giving people around the world the opportunity to learn from first-rate professors, it may not have anticipated its program would bring far-reaching changes to Chinese thought.

But that's exactly what has happened. Open courses offered by top American universities have become indispensable for many young Chinese students who seek every avenue they can find to enrich their lives.

While more Chinese students seek educational material from abroad, they lament the paucity of interesting coursework at home. They see China's assessment-driven education system as rigid and ineffective.

They also wonder: why are China's top universities not providing open courses for the rest of the world?



Lectures about death by Shelly Kargan, the jeans and sneakers-clad professor at Yale, is a favorite among Chinese open course fans.



Many Chinese teachers still teach students using assessment-driven education concepts.

CFP Photo

spread to top universities like Yale, Harvard and Duke. Plans are in place to expand the program further in the next 10 years, with costs covered by private donations from the American public.

New thinking about traditional education

"These open course are not only meaningful for us young people, but also meaningful for Chinese teachers and educators," said Deng Fuzheng, a local college student.

Deng, who has been addicted to these open courses since last year, said they've made him realize the gap between the US and Chinese education systems.

Deng said he spent 16 years memorizing facts, but "I never thought attaining knowledge could be a joyful thing."

He said Chinese teachers are always too focused on teaching textbooks and don't encourage students to speak their mind. Classes are normally boring and quiet.

"Those US professors are always trying to guide and enlighten students to think for themselves instead of telling them what the right answer is," Deng said, adding that he also feels there's a big gap between himself and students in the US, which is a source of frustration.

He said students in the open

course exercise clear logic and ideas. They actively speak their mind and exchange ideas with the professors. They don't care if their answers are right or wrong – however that may be defined.

"However, China's examination-oriented education system made me only care about the score and the 'right answer,' without paying much attention to my way of thinking," Deng said.

Deng said the open courses' popularity in China is a sign that young people are unsatisfied with their country's education system.

"I think domestic teachers and educators should watch these open courses and learn from them," he said.

Education experts say knowledge sharing is a novel idea and praiseworthy, especially since universities are providing this information with no concern over intellectual property rights.

"The prevalence of American open classes reflects the spirit of sharing," said Wang Zhuli, vice director of the modern education technology research center at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangdong. "It sets up a good model for how to change and improve our teaching methods."

Sharing, a good example to follow

Wang suggested that lectures

by some popular Chinese speakers and professors could be translated into foreign languages and posted online to help foreigners understand Chinese culture.

He also said Chinese educators should consider working together to make top Chinese university courses available overseas.

China has made efforts to introduce such a service, but the result has fallen far short of expectations.

Wang Feng, chairman of China Open Resources for Education (CORE), said it's hard to promote Chinese open courses.

Established in October 2003, CORE is a consortium of more than 70 Chinese universities. As a non-profit organization, it aims to introduce advanced courseware from MIT and other top universities around the world to China. At the same time, CORE shares advanced Chinese courses and other resources with universities around the world.

But the quality of the Chinese courses, Wang said, is so pitiful that even Chinese students don't want to watch.

Some netizens have criticized these so-called open courses as papers. They are also incredibly dry and hard to follow.

"Those courses were never designed with the intent for someone to learn something after

watching," a netizen wrote on his blog. "There is only text and PowerPoint presentations – no teacher, no student and no interaction. There is no difference between that and me reading a book by myself."

For Wang Feng, the courses' abstract subject matters, lack of follow-up and intellectual property rights issues are the main reasons for their failure.

He said most US open courses take basic concepts and present them in an interesting way.

Wang Feng said Chinese teachers are also afraid their lectures and related resources may be copied if they're made available online.

However, for Zhao Peng, former president of China University of Geosciences, the main problem is not property rights or money, but a deeply rooted Chinese reluctance to share information.

Zhao said, very bluntly, he is not optimistic about the development of Chinese open courses.

"The spirit of the open course is sharing, which is hard for the Chinese, as we are not accustomed to sharing resources with others," Zhao said, adding that many Chinese prefer to do research alone.

"Without the foundation of sharing, open courses in China are doomed to fail," he said.

Expat restaurant manager finds opportunities and success in Beijing

By Zhao Hongyi

Pawan Kumar, a 32-year-old from India, has lived and worked in Beijing for eight years operating restaurants and promoting South Asian cuisine.

"Beijing is so dynamic," Kumar said. "It's a nice place to run a business and earn money."

Young, hospitable and talkative, Kumar shared his stories and experiences working in Beijing.



King Steak entrance

On the fifth floor of the Jinyuanshidai Shopping Mall at the northwest corner of Fourth Ring Road are restaurants and snack bars that serve all kinds of world cuisines.

Among them is a well-decorated and eye-catching restaurant, King Steak, which is where Pawan Kumar, 31, stands watch as owner and manager.

Kumar, who came to China in 2002 straight out of college, first worked for an American operating the Chingari restaurant in the diplomatic community. Chingari was the first restaurant in Beijing to offer South Asian dishes from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Kumar said, proudly.

Kumar insisted on importing ingredients from India. By doing so, the restaurant won the favor of emissaries, diplomats, expats and locals alike. Chingari gradually became the most famous Indian restaurant in Beijing, providing special banquets and buffet services to customers in addition to daily meals.

In 2008, Kumar helped open a second restaurant in Shangdu SOHO called Tamarind, which served more upscale Indian food.

"It wasn't easy to operate an Indian restaurant in Beijing, considering the high cost of ingredients and narrow profit margin," Kumar said.

But his perseverance paid off. Loyal customers who enjoyed Chingari began going to Tamarind, whose success allowed Kumar to open King Steak four



Kumar and his new chef at King Steak

Photos by Zhao Hongyi

months ago.

The new restaurant is decorated in the mixed style of Russian and Indian. All the tables, lights and VIP rooms are in a classically Russian style, but Kumar treasures his Indian food, so he built an oven in the

middle of the restaurant to bake Indian pancakes.

"I'm trying to provide various cuisines and flavors in the restaurant to meet young diners' needs," Kumar said. King Steak offers American steak, Russian soup, Indian pancake and even

Japanese sushi.

"The diversity of our menu reflects the diversity of our [expat] community," Kumar said.

Last year, Kumar married during a visit back to India, and four months ago his wife gave birth to a son.

But he has no plans of leaving anytime soon. In fact, he moved his family to Beijing.

"It's much easier to run a business and earn money here," he said. "We're minorities, yet we have more opportunities."

Asked why he and his friends have stayed in China for so many years and whether they have thought about returning home, Kumar said China is so dynamic that he finds it hard to leave.

His chef, also from India, has been working in China for even longer – 12 years, first in Kunming, then Wuhan.

Kumar believes an Indian Street or South Asian Street can work in Beijing, reflecting the international aspect of the city. "It can also be an important channel to stabilize bilateral relations," he said.

Now that Kumar has brought his family to Beijing, he wishes to continue to work and live in the city for a long time.

"The Chinese, and in particular Beijingers, are so kind and tolerant and welcoming of foreigners, we have no reason to withdraw after earning our money," he said. "I consider myself half-Chinese. The least I can do is now contribute to the city and society."

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Chinese language school opens in Sanlitun

By Liang Meilan

The Hutong School, a reputable Chinese language school opened in April 2005, has recently opened a school in the Sanlitun area.

The school occupies a spacious office on the 15th floor of the Zhongyu building. There are six classrooms with a maximum of 10 people per class.

Looking through the French-designed window, one gets a panorama of the Sanlitun commercial area.

Hutong School decided to expand because its old school near the Drum and Bell Towers is getting overcrowded. It also has a location near the Central Business District.

"We're offering convenience by opening a venue in a commercial area where foreign companies are located and expats frequently visit," said Ferry Rebergen, the school's 28-year-old marketing manager.

A highlight of the school's curriculum is an internship program that places foreign students inside companies as interns. In this way, students learn both in the classroom and through immersion.



Chinese language school in Sanlitun

Photo provided by The Hutong School

So far, the school has sent foreigners to small- and medium-sized companies in sales and marketing, project support, IT and curatorial labs. Partner companies include Lenovo.

Sixty students have registered at the new location so far, with many more showing interest.

Teachers at the school do not necessarily have Chinese language teaching certificates.

"They share a passion for the language and are responsible for imparting their culture

to students," Rebergen said, adding that certificates are sometimes simply sold, and therefore meaningless.

"Our teachers are all well trained in language and cross-cultural pedagogy," he said.

The school teaches language with an emphasis on a particular subject, such as Chinese law. These subjects are catered to student needs.

Marta Wodecka from Poland is one of the students, having been in Beijing for 10 months.

"I came to China for two reasons – to study Chinese and find a job. Hutong School has taught me Chinese and managed to find me an interesting internship," she said.

"Chinese is not an easy language but teachers do their best to adjust classes to students' learning capabilities and do not get angry if you ask the same question three times in the row."

The school also offers intensive courses for students at higher levels. One-on-one classes centered more on language acquisition are also available.

"The new school will see much more internship program students, while the old school will see more intensive language students," Rebergen said.

The school also helps introduce students to volunteer projects both in municipal volunteer institutions and NGOs.

To immerse students in local life, the school arranges culture activities now and then. Upcoming events include an opening party for newcomers tonight and a trip to Tianjin on Saturday. Non-students are welcome to join. Visit hutong-school.com for more details.

Tianjin Goldin Metropolitan Polo Club Team and UK Polo Team in action

Tianjin Goldin Metropolitan Polo Club



Snow polo hits China

By Han Manman

Asia's first "snow polo" tournament will be held next Tuesday at Tianjin Goldin Metropolitan Polo Club, China's newest and largest polo field.

Snow polo originated in the Swiss winter resort of St. Moritz in 1960, with some calling it the pinnacle of polo because of its spectacle. The

game is played by two teams of three using an orange ball slightly bigger than the average polo ball.

Paul Stevens, general manager of Tianjin's Metropolitan Polo Club, whose family has been involved in the management of Britain's premier polo institution for more than 50 years, believes that China has

the ingredients to become a new frontier for polo.

He also hopes the game will emerge as a lifestyle activity for China's affluent.

"There is now a second generation of rich Chinese who are well educated and are real enthusiasts for actually doing things," Stevens said. "One of those things will be polo."

Six teams from England, France, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and China will compete during the six-day event, which will end next Sunday. The players are all professionals backed by their national associations, and two matches will be played daily in a league format, 14-goal open, during the week-long event.

Event

Learning I Ching

I Ching, also called the *Book of Changes*, is one of the oldest Chinese texts and a valuable resource for gaining insight into Chinese culture. Rockie Wang, an I Ching expert, is offering a class to teach what on earth is "cogito, ergo and sum." For those engaged in serious study, especially in mathematics, astrology or psychology, this class will open your thinking on these concrete subjects.

Where: Art Museum of Beijing Fine Art Academy, 1 Liulitun Bei Li, Chaoyang District

When: February 11, 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 13071136035

Cost: 200 yuan

Charity fashion show

The charity fashion show is a longstanding extracurricular activity for students in the International School of Beijing (ISB) to practice their organizational abilities. The newest event, this weekend, will showcase the designs of ISB students as well as those of popular brands such as GAP. A silent auction and a special raffle for a great cause will be conducted during the event to help a school for orphans in Lijiang, Yunnan Province.

Where: ISB, 10 Anhua Jie, Shunyi District

When: February 12, 6:30-9 pm

Tel: 8149 2345

Cost: 50 yuan for students, 70 yuan for adults

Lotus lanterns

People are preparing for the Lantern Festival on February 17, which marks the end of the 15-day Spring Festival. China Culture Center (CCC) is offering a hands-on class for both locals and expats to learn how to make pink paper lanterns in the shape of lotuses. CCC has invited an artist, one of the most renowned traditional lantern makers in Beijing, to lead the class. English translation is provided.

Where: CCC, 101, Kent Center, 29, Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 12, 2-5 pm

Tel: 6432 9341

Cost: 150 yuan, 120 yuan for kids under 12

Mahjong for beginners

Mahjong, one of the most popular pastimes for Chinese people, is played by people from all around the world. Culture Yard teaches basic rules of the game.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: February 13, 10 am – 1 pm

Tel: 8404 4166

Cost: 70 yuan

(By Liang Meilan)

Donate books, receive gifts from North Korea

By Liang Meilan

North Korea, known as the Hermit Kingdom, is on the to-go list of many people around the world, yet very few have the opportunity to set foot across its closely restricted borders.

But one organization is seeking to bring North Korea closer to people outside its borders. Explore North Korea, a travel agency in Dandong, Liaoning Province, is sending postcards directly from North Korean post offices to people who donate gifts or original English-language books to enrich students at the Aston English School in Dandong, Liaoning Province.

The travel agency began collecting English books for libraries in local schools two years ago, and its most recent project is to build a library for Aston and collect storybooks for its students who are younger than 6.

"We've learned that in Dandong, one big challenge to English education is a lack of authentic English material, which means students grow up speaking Chinglish," said Wang Li, marketing manager of the agency.

The travel agency's customers, most of whom are foreigners, proposed the idea of a book drive two years ago, and it received a generous response.

So far, Aston English School has collected more than 200 books.

Fourteen-year-old Maxwell



Children in remote Chinese regions are excited to receive new reading materials.

Photo by Xi Xiaogang/CFP

Neubauer from Toronto is among the most generous donors so far. He has contributed 50 used books and some board games to the project.

"It was an unforgettable experience traveling with Explore North Korea, and what added to the meaning of the trip is the charity book drive," Neubauer said.

The reward for making donations is souvenirs from

North Korea. Those who contribute at least 20 books can receive two kinds of gifts: a 200-yuan North Korean postcard featuring the design of traditional Korean propaganda mailed from an appointed location in North Korea, and a set of Korean bills (five, 10, 100, 200 and 1,000 won).

Explore is a commissioned travel agency that has arranged

tours to North Korea since 2000. It is among the few agencies that provide English guides. Visit explorethekorea.com for more information.

Those who would like to donate books should call Wang at 15941545676 or mail directly to the address below:

Aston English School

Address: 23-4, Liujiang Jie Dandong, Liaoning 118000

Migrant-themed photography competition calls for submissions

By Liang Meilan

Chengbiancun.com, a charity organization devoted to supporting migrant workers in China, is holding an online photography competition themed "Recording the Daily Life of Migrant Workers." Both amateur and professional photographers are welcome to submit their work.

The competition aims to raise awareness of migrant workers and their families by recording their lives.

Until late September, people can submit original photos to tg@chengbiancun.com.

Works uploaded should be accompanied by a caption of 200 words or fewer. Feel free to submit individual photos or a serial.

Works should focus on the lives of migrant workers.

Feng Yuan, a participant, submitted 16 photos depicting

miners' lives during off hours. He titled the picture story *Bittersweetness of Mining Life*.

To take the photos, he spent two days living with miners. "Having learned that mining is a very dangerous job, I've often thought about looking deep into their living conditions. This competition gives me a good opportunity," Feng said.

But each of his photos has the same element: a smile.

"Life is hard. It is especially for miners who risk deadly accidents and pneumoconiosis. But I found these people optimistic. They show no fear, and they know how to enrich their daily life by reading, playing cards with colleagues and singing on their way back to the dormitory after work. I admire their attitude," he said.

More examples can be seen at pic.chengbiancun.com.

Photo reviews will be regularly



A photo submitted on chengbiancun.com

Photo by Sense

conducted during the next several months to cull good photos for an online slideshow.

In October, all the works will be scored according to online feedback and professional judges, and prizes will be

awarded to winners.

The award-winning photos will be taken on an exhibition tour around China. The best works will be published in an album that will be distributed among migrant workers.

Kids spring Family Stage camp opens enrollment

With four years of experience offering theater camps to children, Beijing Playhouse is launching a new version of its popular children's camp - Family Stage, involving parents in rehearsals for the coming new show *Wizard of Oz*. Instead of being taught for 11 straight days

during a holiday break, the camp will be taught on 11 successive Saturdays in the spring.

The first Family Stage is scheduled to run on Saturdays from April 2 to June 11, 9 am to 4 pm, ending with a free performance for families and friends.

Participants, ages 6 to 14, will

perform *Wizard of Oz* with song and dance. Aspiring actors, singers, dancers and musicians are all welcome. Parents will be invited to participate in some of the classes specially designed for them. Student registration and open auditions are Saturday, March 12 at 2 pm.

Where: British School of Beijing, Shunyi campus (across from the International School of Beijing).

When: March 12, 2 pm

Cost: 5,500 yuan

Web site:

beijingplayhouse.com

(By Wei Ying)

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyiing@ynet.com

I'm a baker in Germany and I'd like to go to China for two years or so, but I need to find a job that will also allow me time to travel. I was thinking about NGO work. Can you give me suggestions?

Working for an NGO can be a good choice. Give Shanghai Young Bakers a try. It is an NGO school that teaches young orphans how to bake, founded by French volunteers several years ago. All pastry teachers there are expats. They need part-time teachers as well. Visit shanghaiyoungbakers.com for more information.

I have two days left in my Beijing adventure before I head back. To cap off this amazing trip, do you have any ideas for souvenirs I can take home?

Areas like Wangfujing, Nanluogu Xiang and Wudaoying Hutong are places to find creative gifts with a Chinese flavor. We recommend engraved chopsticks, small Peking Opera figurines, embroidered silk and chunlian - a pair of paper scrolls containing a poetic couplet. Don't forget to bargain.

I've heard that some e-book readers made in China are of high quality and really cheap, but there are hundreds of them! How do I choose? My budget is about 800 yuan.

Try TECLAST, which makes an e-book reader - model TL-K6-W4GB16 - with an advanced screen that's sold for about 900 yuan. On the most popular digital product website, B2C platform 360buy.com, this model is priced around 1,000 yuan and is among the best sellers. You can visit the website to find more information about it.

I was living in Beijing a few years ago. Back then, a used bike was so cheap, only about 50 yuan. Now most used bikes are nearly 200 yuan. Where can I find inexpensive used bikes again?

Inexpensive used bikes used to be more available in town because a lot of them were stolen. After local police cracked down on illegal used bike sales, a used bike's price rose to between 100 and 250 yuan. Depending on its make, the price is actually reasonable.

(By Liang Meilan)



By He Jianwei

"A living civilization creates; a dying builds museums," the German-born American physician Martin H. Fischer once said.

As the historic monuments in the capital cities of France and China, the Louvre and the Forbidden City are the most-visited museums in each country, with collections of art and artifacts from Western and Eastern civilization.

When the Louvre Meets the Forbidden City, a 12-episode documentary that began on CCTV's documentary channel on the first day of traditional New Year, creates a dialogue between the two streams of civilization.

By looking back on ancient civilization and observing the communication between cultures, the filmmakers rethink how to incorporate the old as heritage while building a new civilization.

Down the stream

Twelve episodes document two majestic

When "The Louvre Napoleon I," an exhibition of more than 100 private treasures of Napoleon, opened at the Forbidden City in 2008, Zhou Bing and his crew were the only official film crew to document the exhibition.

"We found that it was more than an exhibition. The exchange opened a giant door – a door of communication between Western and Eastern cultures," said Zhou, a commercially and critically successful filmmaker famous for his documentaries *The Forbidden City*, *Dunhuang*, *Taipei's Forbidden City* and *The Bund*.

After finishing his work on *The Forbidden City*, he came up with the idea to compare two majestic museums to see Eastern and Western culture through their collected works.

When he told his idea to the people at the Louvre, they promised to let him make a documentary in their museum because they were curious to learn how Chinese people see Western classics.

Working for two years, Zhou and his crew visited the Louvre five times to film cultural relics from prehistory to the 19th century. The crew spent three weeks in Paris on each visit.

By negotiating with the staff at the Louvre, Zhou and his crew were permitted to record on the days the museum was closed. Each person on Zhou's team was given three pieces of paper detailing the museum's regulations on filming.

"The regulations were detailed, and some of their requirements were things we had never dealt with before," he said. For instance, any object ascending 3 meters had to have detection equipment to prevent fires, and no electrical equipment was permitted to touch the floor.

After two years of editing and dubbing, the documentary was completed as a series of 12 40-minute episodes. "It was the first in-depth documentary to examine Chinese and Western art to find the differences and similarities between these traditions," Zhou said.

Each episode explores the stories behind several pieces with an interpretation by a contemporary artist. Sometimes, the episode is juxtaposed with Chinese art from the same period.

In the seventh episode, "Beautiful Life," Zhou tells the story of Leonard Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, which is the Louvre's top attraction.

Franco-Chinese Yan Pei-Ming offers a contemporary interpretation of Da Vinci's painting in the episode. Yan has a special history with the piece, having presented *The Funeral of Mona Lisa* in 2009 in a room adjacent to the original. Preserving Da Vinci's enigmatic smile, Yan's *Mona Lisa* is seen with tears streaming down her face.

If Yan has a modern connection with the Renaissance master, Ni Zan, a poet and painter in Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), was Da Vinci's contemporary.

Besides illustrating the influence of science and geometry in Renaissance art, it also reveals the spirit of traditional Chinese painting.

Using Ni's paintings at the Forbidden City, the episode analyzes the difference between oil painting and ink and wash painting. The former style seeks truth, but the latter a metaphysical concept.

Art had very different streams 700 years ago, but all streams are in the course to the sea, Yan said. "It is a fact that my name and my face are always Chinese. But you can find many Western elements in my paintings. An artist has no boundaries, neither Chinese nor French," Yan said in the interview.

Although the traditions of Western and Chinese art are different, the two cultures have influenced each other.

In the ninth episode, *Looking at Each Other*, Zhou depicts the communication between two cultures. In the 18th century, the clocks became the emperor's toys at the Forbidden City; in a French imperial masquerade, all the participants were made up like Chinese and a Chinese drama adapted by Voltaire, *The Orphan of Zhao*, was popular on French stages.

Chinese style was chic in 18th century Europe, as evidenced by the popularity of rococo style.

As trade expanded, silk, tea, china and lacquer were shipped from China to Europe, intriguing many with the exoticism of Chinese culture.

As one of the representatives of rococo style, French painter Francois Boucher made four oil paintings about China, including depictions of Chinese hunting and wedding, which were exhibited in Paris in 1742.

Boucher did not come to China, but he could buy Chinese objects easily in Paris. He drew the bustle of a European marketplace disguised as a Chinese fair, where people wore Asian costumes beside exotic elephants and camels.

In this episode, Zhou points out that the misunderstanding between the two cultures always has unexpected achievements in art.

"Both the Louvre and the Forbidden City have collections of precious artworks from the past. We hope contemporary artists can revive history in modern life and give us an opportunity to rethink the past and look forward to the future," he said.



French painter Francois Boucher made oil paintings about Chinese wedding.

Each episode explores the stories behind pieces with an interpretation by a contemporary artist. Sometimes, the episode is juxtaposed with Chinese art from the same period.

"Both the Louvre and the Forbidden City have collections of precious artworks from the past. We hope contemporary artists can revive history in modern life and give us an opportunity to rethink the past and look forward to the future."

n of civilization

c palaces

Center stage

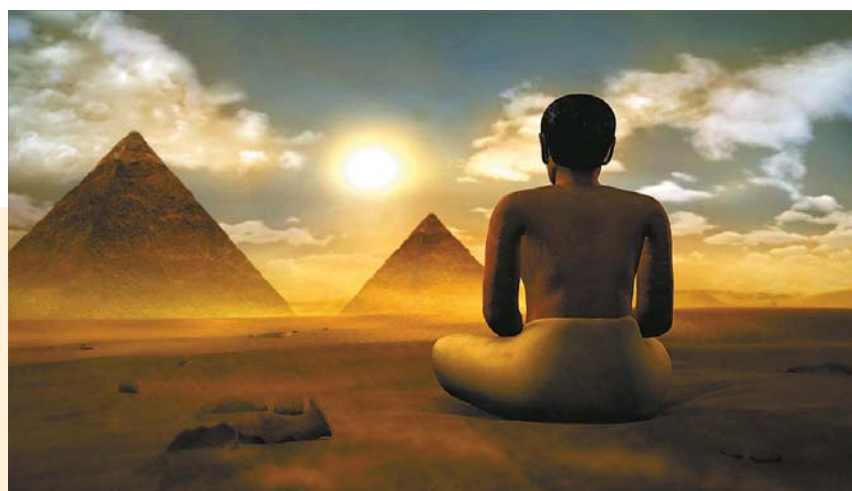
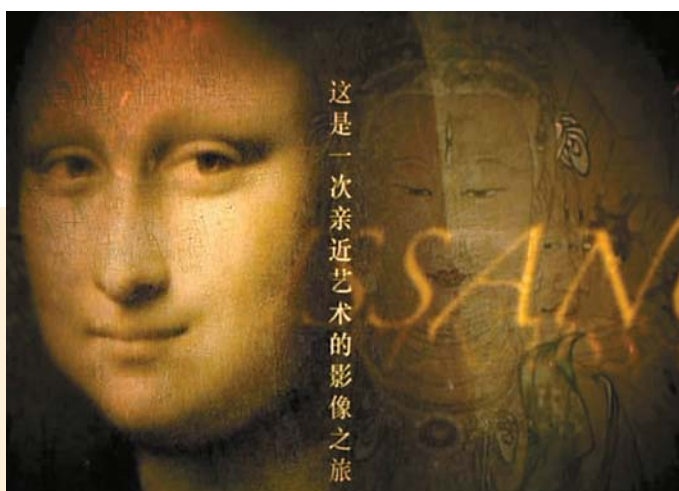


...ding, which were exhibited in Paris in 1742. The misunderstanding between the two cultures always has unexpected achievements in art.

Photos provided by Zhou Bing

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Editor: He Jianwei Designer: Deng Ning

BEIJING TODAY

The power of speech

By He Jianwei

The video "Experience China" has been playing on screens in Times Square for almost a month now, featuring celebrities like pianist Lang Lang, basketball player Yao Ming and astronaut Yang Liwei.

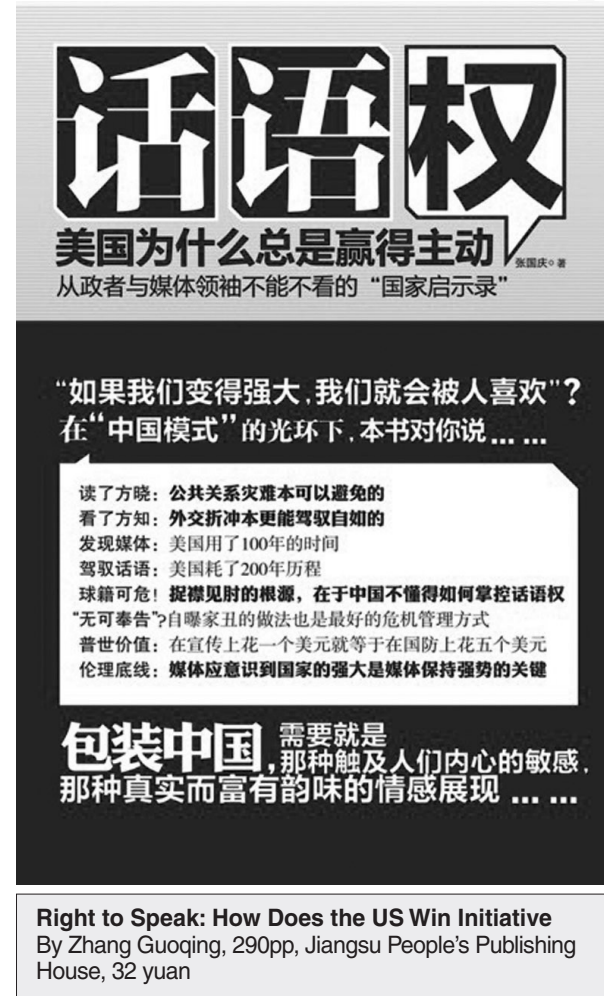
While some see it as a good way to educate foreigners about changes in modern China, critics doubt its effectiveness.

Zhang Guoqing, a scholar from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argues in *Right to Speak: How Does the US Win Initiative* that the government's attempts at expanding its soft power may be misdirected.

In the book, published last month by Jiangsu People's Publishing House, Zhang explains how the US government and corporate media have made use of free speech for the past 200 years to influence the world.

Having studied US issues for several decades, Zhang says the country's constitutional defense of free speech is one of the most important elements resulting in the country becoming so powerful – more important, perhaps, than its economic, political and military strength.

Zhang combs the history of how American government has dealt with domestic and diplomatic relations. In the first chapter, he points out the presidents' attitude toward media. "Every successful American president is good at handling



the media. They see the media not as a burden or enemy, but as a tool and assistant," he writes in the opening.

Thomas Jefferson was one example of a president who faced a torrent of abuse from the media, but at the same time

sought to protect their right to hurl that abuse. Jefferson said the press played an important role in democracy.

Theodore Roosevelt's time in office was the beginning of America's media mechanization. "It is not a coincidence that the growth of the nation's strength and its media appeared at the same time. The two sides may be opposed at times, but they complement each other in serving national interests," he wrote.

Today, news items such as the dispute over the yuan exchange rate become media issues because politicians in Congress made it a political issue during the last mid-term election.

Throughout the economic recession, the high rate of unemployment has been a headache for the government. "If the politicians didn't face pressure to increase employment, they wouldn't have proposed the issue as a scapegoat," he wrote.

Indeed, it's Western media dominance that makes the China's rise so harrowing. After decades of being demonized by Western media, it now has to learn how to use that same media to reshape its image.

Zhang quotes Dwight Eisenhower, who said of a nation's image that a dollar spent on image promotion was worth five spent on defense.

The haunting power of Oates' dark fiction

By Charles Zhu

Joyce Carol Oates, one of the most eminent contemporary American writers, has faced some difficult years since her husband's untimely death in 2008. But those years have not been wasted indulging in memories of the past.

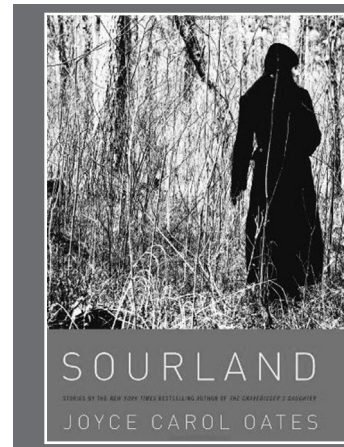
Oates continues to write to shun away her loneliness and bereavement. *Sourland*, her latest collection of stories, the result of her pain, features her trademark violent sexual encounters and emotion-packed sexual hazards.

Sourland is yet another extraordinary work from the literary giant who previously brought us *The Gravedigger's Daughter*, *Blonde*, *We Were the Mulvaney*s and other classic works of contemporary American fiction.

Fifteen new stories and the title novella focus on the plight of naive young female adolescents and newly-bereaved women in a world of pain, suffering, loss and dangerous affections, and explore how the powers of violence, loss and grief shape both the psyche and the soul.

Oates, in these gripping, haunting and intensely moving stories, instead of being resigned and timid as a widow, seems determinedly angry and tough, doing away with the idea that the bereaved wife is a weaker party.

In her bizarre "Pumpkin-



Sourland: Stories
By Joyce Carol Oates,
384pp, Ecco, \$25.99

Head," a widow who has felt "viscerated, worthless" since her husband's death only six months ago invites a man into her home for a drink. The man wears a costume – a pumpkin head, "its leering cut-out eyes not lighted from within, like a jack-o'-lantern, but dark glassy" – and speaks to her "through the grinning slash-mouth in heavily accented English." When he tries to force himself on her with a ferocious sort of Lawrencean male energy, she seems almost to welcome it as overdue punishment.

In "Probate," a new widow still struggling with the sorrow and pain of her husband's demise goes to the state courthouse in Trenton, New Jersey to file her late husband's will

in probate court and ends in a surreal mash-up with the girlfriend of a prisoner and the couple's vicious infant.

"Death Certificate" uses a courthouse in upstate New York as its setting to suggest that even such a solemn place may have dramas of sexual ferocity: a woman who comes to purchase a facsimile of a death certificate encounters a former lover, recalling memories of masturbation tinged with erotic violence as she recalls herself as "a woman screaming and tearing at a pillow cover with her teeth, moaning, sobbing."

In the titular upsetting and yet powerful story, "Sourland," a middle-aged new widow flies to the upper Midwest for a tryst with a bizarre old acquaintance

of her late husband and finds herself entangled in a bizarre situation. She compares the nature of bereavement to "dirty water splashed into her mouth." She is uncertain about whether she wants romance, friendship or some kind of assault. What she experiences seems to be assault.

The men under Oates's pen are often like predatory animals. However, the reader feels no disgust in Oates's stories. Her women, instead of being victims, are often in partnership with wrongdoers, even plotting such encounters in their own restless ways.

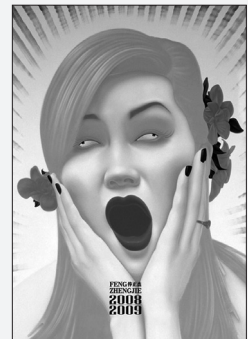
When Oates writes, an aunt's kisses are felt "like swipes with a coarse damp sponge," an ugly girl has a "blunt bold fist of a face" and a worrisome wife finds that "maintaining her cheery hospital manner" is simply like "carrying heavy unwieldy bundles from place to place," with "nowhere to set them down, until at last you drop them."

Though Oates is in her early 70s, she is stubbornly angry and persists in experimenting with art. Oates' stories are as full of suspense and mystery as most of her novels.

As one critic said, "Oates is a master of the dark tale – stories of the hunted and the hunter, of violence, trauma and deep psychic wounds." Her new collection is a testament to the power of the author's dark humor.

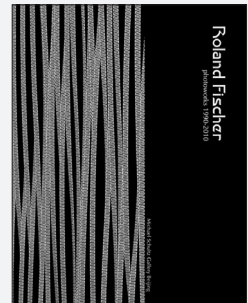
Timezone 8 book listing

Timezone 8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it recommends three new titles to *Beijing Today* readers.



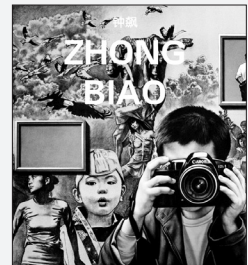
Feng Zhengjie 2008-2009
By Lu Peng, Richard Vine and Feng Zhengjie, 147pp, Timezone 8, \$42

Inspired by a 1930s Shanghai poster, Feng appropriates Andy Warhol's silkscreen palette to paint oversized close-ups of smooth-skinned and flawlessly coiffed young women. This book surveys works made in 2008 and 2009, including his portrait series, floating flora series and sculptures.



Roland Fischer: Photo-works 1990-2010
By Roland Fischer, 218pp, Timezone 8, \$30

German photographer Fischer adds palpable luminosity to the subjects he depicts. In his marvelous portraits of women in water, shot from the neck up, he uses the water as a lighting device to bestow the faces of his subjects with clarity and openness.



Zhong Biao
By Zhong Biao, 336pp, Timezone 8, \$50

Zhong seamlessly collages figures and images from both western and eastern culture and history in his realistic, large-scale, self-referential paintings. For instance, Michelangelo's "Pieta" is framed by a modern city skyline and Chinese soldiers smile and pose beside teenagers wearing iPod headphones.

(By He Jianwei)

Improv the new entertainment for young Beijingers

By Li Zhixin

Office workers and students used to go to the theater to watch modern dramas. Today, many of them are going for improv, both to watch it and be part of the show.

For most people in China, improvisational theater comes as a new channel by which they can enrich and rediscover themselves. It can be a fun way to release pressure, and also gives young performers a positive outlook on life.

Performing script-free

"What a nice Valentine's Day night! Atai, can you come for a walk with me through the woods by the school?" said one young actor portraying a schoolgirl lost in romance.

But even before the echo of her words ends, a young man playing the headmaster dashes onto the stage shouting, "How dare you two! This is a campus, not a lovers' park. Behave yourself!"

The story circled around with witty dialogue and ups and downs as the performers improvised their lines in roles chosen by the audience. Although the actors were amateurs, their performance and skill with connecting lines and extending the story brought the house down.

Every Tuesday at 8 pm, these young people gather at People's Republic of Improv workshop in the 46th courtyard of Fangjia Hutong to perform together.

Hu Xin, founder of the group, said most members were between 20 and 45 years and coming to find an outlet for their pressures.

Hu first studied improv in a language class where her teacher used improv to train speaking and listening comprehension in France in 2004.

When she returned to China in 2006, she met a group of expats involved in Beijing Improv, an English-speaking performing troupe. However, she found there were no Chinese participants in the group, and established a bilingual workshop under Beijing Improv.

"For language learners, improv is really an effective way to train your foreign language and communication skills as well as to expand your knowledge of foreign culture and customs, as the words are rich in context and variety," she said.

But the group's Chinese participants did not integrate well into the bilingual workshop. The language barrier made them even more shy, so Hu decided to start a Chinese-only improv group, the People's Republic of Improv, in 2009.

"It is easier to get more Chinese people involved in these events that are Chinese-only and they seem to have more fun. It gives them a chance to experience regional variations in culture since the participants come from all corners of the country," she said.

More than decompression

In order to promote improv among Chinese people, Hu, a communication trainer at a consulting company, persuaded her boss to send her to an advanced improv training course in New York where she studied the art.

"I learned to use 'Yes, and ...' to think and behave instead of simply saying 'No' or 'Yes, or,'" she said. "I now try to give others a positive acknowledgement and accept their viewpoints first, and then try to



The participants can quickly integrate into their roles.

Photos provided by Hu Xin



establish collaboration and tacit understanding," she said.

Wang Yang, 30, an IT worker, used to use support groups, psychotherapy and hypnotherapy to relieve his work pressures and angst. When he first encountered improv half a year ago, he became obsessed. "You have no time to think during performing, so everything is instinctive reactions. Since there is no time to prepare a disguise, your mind gets a chance to relax," he said.

Improv is more than Wang's stress relief: it's his chance to give and receive careful insights into life. "I used to resist when my boss asked me to work overtime. Now I have learned to see the situation from his perspective, and to try to understand his feelings and mentality," he said.

Dong Cheng, 35, works for a toy company and is an introvert. "I realized that isolation was not good for my personal growth, so I have to force myself to become an extrovert and develop a more pleasant personality," he said. Improv offers him a chance to improve his personality to some extent.

Although his basic personality has changed little, his social circle has expanded over the last three years. "I've discovered I'm actually really good at integrating into groups," he said.

Tian Tian, 34, a clerk in a cultural institution, participates to fulfill his deep interest in drama. "Traditional drama is just like classic oil painting and requires long-term practice. Improv is more like sketching. It may be less magnificent, but it makes up for that by being lively, bold and exciting," he said.

Tian is frequently called on to help com-

panies arrange performances for their annual meetings and parties, so he draws on improv to bring out the trainees' emotions. "Improv is an effective way to get people who have never performed in public before to relax and be happy," he said. "Their creativity is usually pleasantly surprising."

New expectation

Improv originated from Renaissance Europe. It became an independent art form in Western countries during the 1950s, and remains very popular in France, Britain, the US and Canada.

"Improv is in its infancy in China as it is still the domain of training classes and art schools – the public at large couldn't access it before improv workshops like ours began to promote it," Hu said.

Through online communities like Douban and Renren and word of mouth, improv has found a fairly devoted following in the capital. "Our workshop has more than 1,000 members registered online. I hope more people can take interest in improv to learn from it and participate in it," she said.

Hu, as the founder of the People's Republic of Improv, said she expects improv to only grow in popularity. "Anyone who takes the plunge and does it once will fall in love with it," she said.

She hopes to bring improv to primary and middle schools to give children an early outlet to develop their personality and expressiveness.

"Knowing yourself and other people, and being able to establish a rapport are some of the best things in life. The earlier on you begin working on this, the sooner and longer you can enjoy the benefits," she said.

Other improv workshops

Beijing Improv

When: Wednesdays, 7 – 9 pm

Where: Jiangjingu Music Bar, between the Drum and Bell towers on the west side of the parking lot
Tel: 8405 0124

Eryuedang Improv

When: Saturdays, 3 – 5:30 pm

Where: Zuilefang Bar, 18 Andingmen West Street, Dongcheng District
Tel: 15110039935

Cheeky Monkey Improv

When: Thursdays, 8 – 9:30 pm
Where: D22 Bar, Chengfu Road, Haidian District
Tel: 15810803034 / 6265 3177

Inexpensive gifts for Valentine's Day

By Annie Wei

Photos provided by Nytimes.com

We're fast approaching the latest excuse to buy gifts for yourself and loved ones: Valentine's Day. Do you have your list ready?

New smell, new me

It's rare to find a man who knows how to pick the right gift, and even rarer is the one who can choose an appropriate scent. Well, at least at Shin Kong Plaza, he has plenty of choices. Ladies, feel free to tag along to help him choose.

Shin Kong Plaza

Where: 87 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Tel: 6530 5888



30 milliliters, 400-450 yuan;
50 milliliters: 550-700 yuan;
100 milliliters: 800-990 yuan

Photos provided by Marc Jacobs/Vera Wang/Chloe/TOUS



DIY ring as token of love

An independent designer in New York came out with a ring featuring 12 hand-carved and painted lacquer rabbits set on 18-karat gold bands, which start at \$2,450 (16,660 yuan). If this sounds too gaudy for you, the amateur jewelry designer can purchase do-it-yourself materials from Taobao (rabbit: less than 1 yuan; gold band: 2 yuan) and, with a bit of glue, make an adorable ring in less than a day. You can also find other animal patterns online. Or, drill a hole and you have a pendant, the perfect gift that says: "it's the thought that counts."



Rabbit ring, 3 yuan



Owl ring, 20 yuan

Photos by Yu Tingmei



Puppy's tuxedo outfit, 200 yuan

Photo provided by Andi.yoho.cn

Puppy love

Dog ownership is trendy among urban dwellers, especially small dogs like the Teddy Robin that are suitable to keep in small apartments.

Here's a novel gift proposal: 200 yuan on a chic jacket for your beloved puppy.

AndI is a local and original dog outfit brand created by three young women who all know the frustrations of shopping for dogs.

The brand is selective with its materials. Each outfit design has been tweaked many times, with attention given to the latest fashion.

The first series include seven designs. Elements include gold legging for night clubbing, a tuxedo design for formal events, sporty wear for daily walks and a cape inspired by Lady GaGa.

The brand said they have no designs for cats yet, though felines seem to appreciate the bow.

Lazy Sunday

Where: Room 2108, Building 2, Sanlitun Soho, 8 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Web site: andi.yoho.cn/prelist_264

Balance heavy holiday meals with a vegetarian diet

By Annie Wei

Those who spent their Chinese New Year holiday traveling in the south may have been astonished to find the simple secret of delicious food: fresh ingredients. The greens are fresh and juicy, with a natural sweetness that comes from being picked in the morning.

While guaranteed freshness is harder to find in Beijing during this dry winter season, it's not impossible. We identified two vegetarian restaurants known for good flavor and selective organic veggies.

Best vegetarian restaurant in town

It's bold for a Buddhist vegetarian restaurant to use the name Samadhi, which is a weighty term referring to the state of realizing one's true self or soul. It's believed that when the true self is found, everything is realized.

Lucky for this restaurant, its reputation has been realized by many sophisticated diners in town.

Chef Zhao Bing's philosophy is to mix and match, copy, experience and recreate.

For appetizer, we recommend the salad crepe (18 yuan) with finely chopped vegetables and mustard ice cream flavor.

Then we recommend the set meal (168 yuan per person). The starter includes small tomatoes, purple tomatoes and chicory and endives. The peeled tomatoes are soaked in osmanthus and pear juice for 16 hours in advance. Each tastes sweet and sour but delicious. Then comes chrysanthemum tofu soup (28 yuan). The Japanese tofu is delicately cut into the shape of a chrysanthemum and served in a vegetable soup. The dish is presented beautifully.

Hotpot bamboo shoots (36 yuan) are served in a paper-made pot with a burnt candle underneath. The bamboo shoots taste light and go well with rice.

The set meal includes another house special



Wandouhuang, 36 yuan



Chrysanthemum tofu soup, 28 yuan

– jintang bilu tofu (28 yuan), made of eggs and soy milk, topped with green spinach and bedded in gold color pumpkin soup. The dish smells nice and tastes clean, with layers of different ingredients' true flavors.

The set meal is finished with a house soup made of various mushrooms and dessert, which includes choices like hot chocolate pudding (48 yuan) and yogurt pudding (32 yuan).

The restaurant is soaked in a light aroma of sandalwood with quite a few Buddha sculptures around that are worth at least 10,000 yuan apiece.

We recommend Samadhi's buy-one-get-one-free promotion every Tuesday. The restaurant also offers a 50 percent discount for seasonal dishes on Monday. Samadhi also holds occasional professional tea art shows.

The restaurant claims its ingredients are fresh organic vegetables. Mushrooms are freshly delivered from Yunnan Province daily. Also available is quality tea, especially Tieguanying from Anxi, Anhui Province and organic Oolong tea.

Samadhi Vegetarian and Teahouse

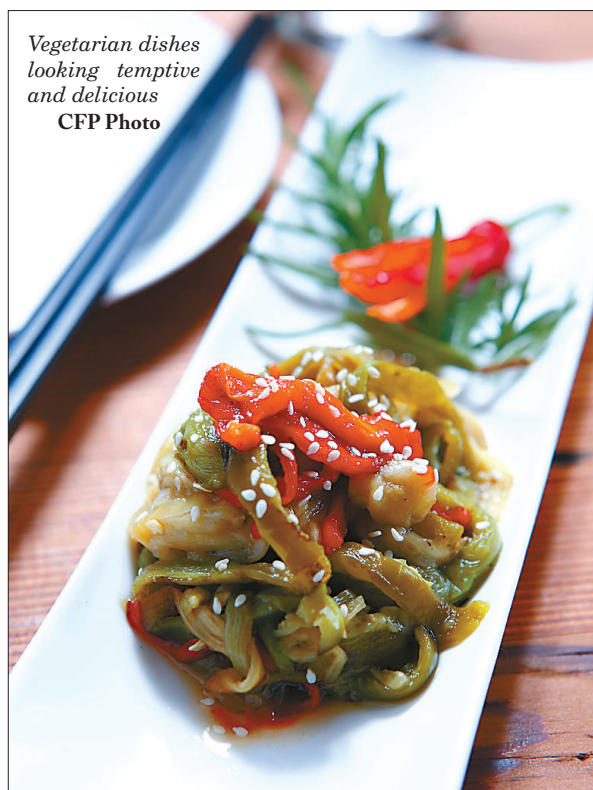
Where: 2nd floor, Shifang Haoting, 16 Xinyuan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 9 pm

Tel: 8453 1644

Vegetarian dishes looking tempting and delicious

CFP Photo



A simple vegetarian eatery

For a simple and inexpensive vegetarian meal in the hectic central business district, there is nothing better than Vegan Hut. The small eatery is on the second floor of Jianwai SOHO and offers organic vegetables from its own organic farm.

It has also the distinction of being the first vegan restaurant in town, serving dishes that contain no dairy or eggs.

To start, we recommend some cold dishes like vegetables roll wrapped by nori paper (10 yuan), or raw zucchini noodle with spaghetti sauce (19 yuan). The cold dishes arrive quickly, and they are good for settling hungry stomachs during peak hours. One can find Vietnamese fried spring rolls (16 yuan) here as well, though the rolls are more Chinese than Vietnamese; it's still great when paired with sweet and sour sauce though.

For the entree, we enjoy the vegan hotpot: the less spicy dry hotpot (48 yuan) and spicy hotpot (58 yuan). The restaurant recently had a promotion on a group e-commerce site: 56 yuan for a 181-yuan meal, including soup, vegetables, mushrooms, tofu-made fish, ham and snails, organic vegetable noodle, home-made sauce and organic whole

wheat soy milk.

The restaurant said it plans to offer more healthy deals online after Spring Festival.

Vegan Hut offers a wide range of selections; apart from fresh fried vegetables, we highly recommend its fried eggplant with basil (26 yuan), brown rice soup (12 yuan) and organic whole soy milk smoothies (15 yuan). We love its soy peach sorbet (15 yuan), which is one of the best in town.

As a long-time vegan, restaurant owner Yu Li believes that a vegetarian diet not only helps one's body, but also helps the environment. Yu used to work in the telecommunication industry before opening Vegan Hut in 2008, though he continues to host talks on TV and radio.

The restaurant also offers a 28-day healthy diet program, aimed at helping people who want to lower their cholesterol, lose weight or improve their overall health. Li has completed a plant-based nutrition course at Cornell University in New York.

Vegan Hut

Where: Room 0912, Building 9, Jianwai Soho, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 58 69 9856

Other vegetarian restaurants

Baihe Vegetarian

Renovated courtyard-style house in a traditional hutong neighborhood; outdoor seating popular in warmer weather.

Where: Caoyuan Hutong Jia 23, Bei Xiaojie, Dongzhimen Nei, Dongcheng District

Open: 10:30 am – 10:30 pm

Tel 6405 2082

Cat's Cradle

A local young vegetarian woman who likes cooking was encouraged by friends to open this small restaurant. No alcohol or smoking.

Where: 66 Meishuguan Hou Jie, Dongcheng District

Open: 11 am – 9 pm

Tel: 13366221228



Jintang bilu tofu, 28 yuan

Photos provided by Samadhi

The art of X-ray

By Chu Meng

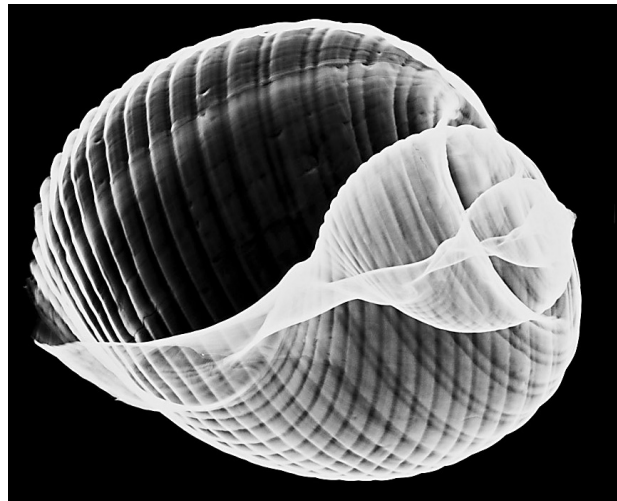
In the black-and-white works of photographer Werner Schuster, viewers can see an extra dimension of ordinary goods in daily life, such as chocolate stuffing inside a toffee candy.

But Schuster is not actually a professional photographer. He is a medical doctor, specializing in radiology, with his own clinics in Vienna, Austria. Since 2002, using a digital mammography unit and his professional knowledge, he has explored the mysterious world of the unseen using X-ray.

In traditional photography, the conditions that create an image are light and time. In X-ray, however, there is more going on. "In other words, I take photos in complete darkness," Schuster said, calling his work experimental photography.

Schuster's purpose was to investigate the beauty underneath the surfaces of common objects. "Black Light," the title of the coming exhibition in Beijing, forces viewers to think more deeply about both photography and the everyday world.

In a work called "Souvenir," Schuster uses X-rays to photograph Russian matryoshka dolls. The X-rays are penetrating, allowing people to see all seven layers of dolls



together. In "Six Nuts," the rays pierce the nuts' shells and allow us to glimpse their wondrous interior shading and structure. In "Trumpet Shell," people are made aware of clearly delicate internal helical structures.

"This is precisely the charm of X-ray photography. It lets us see a lot more beauty that is natural and silently covered, deeply under the surface," Schuster said.

He added that people should always try to understand what is beneath the surface of things.

In another group of work, Schuster merges X-ray images with digital pictures. In "Shark

Eating," a picture of toffee is transplanted into the shark's head. In "Scooter Girl," everything except the bicycle looks normal; the bike is an X-Ray image.

"If an image evolves from an innate artistic stance, whatever the technology used to obtain it, that image will always make us appreciate the beauty of photography and nature," Schuster said.

Schuster has loved photogra-

phy since he was 6 years old. The idea to make X-ray photography came to him after an invitation to present a new mammography appliance in 2002. A year later, he used X-ray to photograph various objects, resulting in his first portfolio, "X - FRUITS: Photos Taken Without a Camera," two years later.

"Every one of Dr. Schuster's works contain his understanding of himself and the world around him, and this understanding is not lacking in humor and childlike wonder," said Bridget Noetzel, international affairs representative at Three Shadows Photography Art Center.

Black

Where: Three Shadows Photography Art Center, No. 155A Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: February 19 - March 3, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 2663

Saturday, February 12

Exhibition At This Present Moment

This exhibition presents Yu Bogong's works,

which depict the world through aspects of Indian Buddhism and China's Five Elements Theory, describing the interaction and relationship between phenomena.

Where: White Space Beijing, 255 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 13, daily except Monday, 11 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8456 2054

Nightlife

Erez Eisenman & Borneo

Eisenman performs his latest songs in a trio accompanied by Nicolas Mege on drums and Philippe Mege on bass. The rock band Borneo combines rock with soulful elements of the 1960s.

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: February 6, 8 pm
Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711

Movie



Together (2010)

Gu Changwei's feature film about the country's HIV/AIDS carriers, *Life is a Miracle*, is revisited in Zhang Liang's documentary, which follows Gu in the making of his movie.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

Friday, February 11

5 Exhibition

Beyond-ism - Sun Xun Solo Exhibition

Inspired by the artist in residence project in Yokohama, this exhibition includes animation, ink drawings and hand-drawn drafts that depict how history is written.

Where: ShangHART Gallery, 261 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 6, daily except Monday, 11 am - 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 3202

Movie

Baba-Yaga and Others (2003)

This animation is about a little girl wandering in the forest who meets Baba-Yaga, a witch-like character in Russian folklore, and other supernatural creatures.

Where: Russian Culture Center, Building 2, No. 9 Courtyard, Dongzhimen Nei Dajie,

Dongcheng District

When: 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8406 0224

Nightlife



The Life Opinions of Two Dogs

This satirical drama is about two cynical dogs that leave their hometown to pursue their dreams, but find that city life isn't what they hoped it would be.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-380 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Sunday, February 13

Exhibition Temple Drum

This exhibition includes paintings by Peter Gardener after his five-week

journey last year to Chengdu, Pingyao, Xi'an, Chongqing, Wuhan and Shanghai.

Where: Imagine Gallery, 8 Feijiacun Art Center, Feijiacun, Laiguangying Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 30, daily except Monday, 10:30 am - 5:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6438 5747

Nightlife

Eve of Valentine's Day Party

Five punk and rap bands - IC Girls Band, Emitter, Ricky Sixx, Shaojiu Juntan and Duli Wuzhuang - define happiness in their songs in advance of Valentine's Day.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 40 yuan advance purchase, 50 yuan at the door
Tel: 6402 5080

Movie

HHH: A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-Hsien (1997)

Made by French director and screenwriter Olivier Assayas, this documentary fol-

lows Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-Hsien as he wanders through Taipei visiting childhood friends and discussing his life and work.

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students
Tel: 8459 9269

Upcoming

Concert

Sun Yingdi Piano Recital

Sun, who won first prize at the 7th International Franz Liszt Piano Competition in 2005, will play programs by Liszt, Ravel and Rachmaninoff.

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 200-280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Stage in March

Concert

Peter Vinograd Piano Recital

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 4, 7:30 pm
Admission: 50-380 yuan
Tel: 5166 1145

Katie Targett-Adams & Irish Band Ciorras

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 18 Zhaodengyu Lu, Xicheng District

When: March 18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 30-380 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

Nikolaj Znaider and Staatskapelle Dresden

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 26-27, 7:30 pm
Admission: 200-980 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Dance

Raise the Red Lantern

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 13-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

The Accidental Death of An Anarchist

Where: Fengchao Theater, 200 meters east of Oriental Ginza, No. 12 Shizipo, Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: March 9-20, 7:30 pm
Admission: 50-200 yuan
Tel: 5165 1914

Much Ado About Nothing

Where: Nine Theater, Chaoyang Culture Center, 17 Jintai Li, Chaoyang District

When: March 25-26, 7:30 pm
Admission: 60-380 yuan
Tel: 6551 6930 / 6906

Goddess of Luo River

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-380 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Opera

Kunqu: The Story of Jade Hairpin

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 150 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

Firework fun creates health hazards

By Li Zhixin

As the birthplace of fireworks, people in China have been celebrating with decorative explosives since the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The deafening noise of firecrackers on New Year's Eve is a big part of the festive atmosphere and an important tradition to ensure an auspicious new year.

But when detonated, fireworks emit numerous poisonous and hazardous substances. The overuse of fireworks can endanger both safety and health.



Shalang/CFP Photo

Firework-related ailments

1. Respiratory and nervous damage

Smoke emitted by fireworks consists of a fine toxic dust that can easily enter the lungs. It is an immediate health risk for those who are already sick, and even those who are currently healthy.

The explosion itself also creates a mixture of chemical components which include sulfur dioxide, nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide.

When a firework is detonated, a number of chemical reactions take place to create numerous new substances, the composition and toxicity of which are difficult to determine.

According to Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau, the level of dangerous suspended particulate matter in the air on New Year's Eve is 10 times greater than the city's average.

"Under that cloud of poisonous gases, many people may find their chronic diseases worsened due to respiratory and visual stimulation," said Tong Zhaohui, a pneumologist at Chaoyang Hospital. "People with respiratory and circulatory problems should avoid being around fireworks."

2. Cerebrovascular disease

The intense noise of fireworks

can aggravate both cranial vascular disease and heart disease. The risk of attacks increases with noise decibels.

According to the State Environmental Protection Administration's data, the noise where fireworks are permitted to be set off can reach 135 decibels — far more than normal human tolerance. "Once the noise at night exceeds 45 decibel — about as loud as a frog's croak — a person's quality of sleep will be greatly affected," he said.

3. Multiple chemical sensitivity

Fireworks are not fun for most people who have multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

The possible list of symptoms of MCS is almost endless, and varies from patient to patient. There is also an overlap between the symptoms of MCS and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, but most sufferers of MCS complain of breathlessness and nausea, extreme fatigue or lethargy, headache, migraine, vertigo or dizziness, poor memory and concentration, a runny nose, sore throat, cough, sinus problems, skin rashes and itching, sensitivity to light and noise, sleeping problems, digestive problems, muscle and joint

pain, burning and stinging eyes and wheezing.

"They just stay inside on New Year's Eve and hermetically seal any doors and windows when fireworks are being set off," Dong said. "A good air purifier is a must in order to get through the holiday without illness."

4. Deafness

The sudden noise of firecrackers can cause damage to the structure of the hair cells and nerves involved in hearing.

Explosions may result in immediate deafness that is permanent and accompanied by tinnitus — a ringing, buzzing or roaring in the ears or head.

It may also cause temporary hearing loss. When a person is exposed to the noise over a long period of time, symptoms of hearing loss will increase gradually. Over time, the sounds a person hears may become distorted or muffled, and it may be difficult for the person to understand speech. If a person regains hearing, the temporary hearing loss is called a temporary threshold shift largely disappears 16 to 48 hours after exposure to a loud noise. Prevent it by using hearing protectors such as earplugs or earmuffs.

Safety first

The festival season is the year's peak for fireworks-related injuries. In the first 16 hours of the new year, some 223 people were injured by fireworks and two killed.

Most fireworks accidents require hospitalization and involve damage to the hands, fingers, face and eyes. Burns and blindness are common. Keep yourself and your loved ones safe during the Spring Festival by taking some extra caution:

1. The easiest way to prevent injury and death from fireworks is to leave fireworks displays to the professionals.
2. Read all the labels, warnings and instructions for each firework before using it. Use fireworks outdoors on a flat smooth surface and away from houses, flammable materials, trees and dry grass.
3. Children are often the victims of fireworks mishaps. Supervise them closely when they use fireworks. Never allow children to horseplay or run around when someone is setting off fireworks. Be extra careful when children are around and never aim fireworks at people or animals.
4. Sparklers are dangerous, so light only one firework at a time and keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.
5. Do not approach or try to relight fireworks that have not gone off to avoid sudden explosions and injury.
6. Place all fireworks on the ground when lighting and move to a safe distance. Never hold fireworks in your hands or place them in containers like bottles or cans.
7. Do not use fireworks around flammable liquids or hazardous materials. Keep a bucket of water or hose nearby for emergencies.
8. Never use fireworks while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Be responsible.

The tradition and elegance of the Southern Great Wall

By Zhang Dongya

The Great Wall, the defining architectural wonder of ancient China, was built as a defense against the nomads of the north. But a little known fact is that the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) also built sections of the Great Wall in the south.

The Great Wall in Hunan and Guizhou provinces are the only sections in southern China. The Wall here is a unique case of contrast, and surrounded by traditional villages and customs.

Featuring Miao culture

Located in northwest Hunan Province, the wall here was built to guard against the Miao, a rebellious minority during Ming. Thus, the section was later called the Miao Frontier Great Wall.

Its major body is located in today's Fenghuang County, a well-known ancient town in western Hunan.

During Ming, Miao people living on the border of Hunan and Guizhou provinces were divided: some submitted to the court, while others organized violent uprisings. To stabilize the border, the Ming built the Great Wall to isolate the rebellious group.

Today, more than 33 percent of people living in western Hunan are Miao descendants who has maintained traditional Miao manners and customs.

Miao drums and Miao hamlets built primarily with bamboo poles are commonly seen around the Great Wall here.

Southern Great Wall

Starting from Xique Ying, the Magpie Barracks in Guzhang County in Hunan, the Miao Great Wall stretches to Tingzi Guan, or Pavilion Pass, on the border of Hunan and Guizhou.

The Pavilion Pass, built in

1615, is a large round military outpost that used to have three gates in the east, west and south. In ancient times, it would have been common to see piles of arrows nestled against the wall and stored in fort barbettes, which soldiers and their families called home.

The ancient gates have since been destroyed, and only four barbettes remain.

The walls, 3 meters high and 2 meters wide, were mostly constructed on ridges. They were built with blue stones, which have since turned black. Textual research shows that all the stones used in the walls were chiseled from the mountain's base. Since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), some parts have been destroyed by locals who have used the stones to build their own houses. The walls were later restored, and in 2001, the local government rebuilt about two kilometers of the Wall.

On the other side of a stone bridge is the foot of the Great Wall. Nearby is the East Gate and a small watchtower with a pavilion. Once through the gate, the wall extends up on the left; some sections are steep and narrow, and difficult to get through.

Continued on page 21...



Restored East Gate, the major watchtower of the Miao Great Wall



A large guandao was made to imitate the weapon of Guan Yu, a hero during the Three Kingdoms period.



A reproduced cannon is popular with boys.
Photos by Yang Nan



Miao Great Wall, the only part of the Great Wall in southern China, reflects parts of Miao culture and customs.



...continued from page 20

The Miao Great Wall has been extensively renovated. During the spring and summertime, when forests are thick and grass grows luxuriantly, walls can be seen zigzagging through the green mountains. The stones used in the Miao Great Wall were only a tenth of the size of the stones in the northern Wall, and its watchtowers are more delicate and refined, built with tops resembling southern pavilions.

Along the walls is a large *guandao*, a Chinese polearm, and cannon. The *guandao* is 8 meters long and weighs 1,500 kilograms. It was made to imitate the weapon of Guan Yu, a hero during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280).

Legend has it that Qing soldiers got sick when they stationed in the Miao Great Wall because they were attacked by evil spirits. To bolster morale, the general made the *guandao*, which was expected to exorcise the spirits.

Standing at the top of the Yushuiping section, one will see the walls winding like a dragon along the mountain. In the distance, an ancient town can be seen.

Villages and stockaded hamlets around the area are named after borders or passes, such as the Ala Pass and Jingbian Border.

The Miao Great Wall breaks down considerably around Shiping Mountain in Guizhou. The stone roads here

are broken, and the walls dilapidated.

In other parts, modern renovators copied the appearance of the northern Great Wall, with bad results.

"People restored the walls to a good condition but they forgot about the original structure," one tour guide said. "Some restored walls are so high it's hard to imagine how ancient people could have defended these parts."

Typical Miao hamlets around Fenghuang

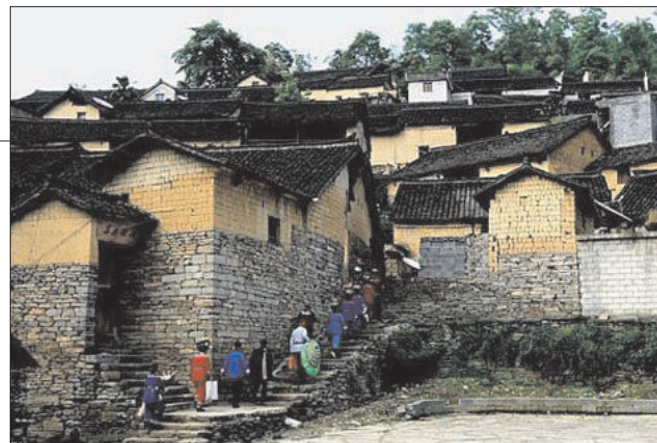
Yandong Miao Village

Located in Shenlonggu Scenic Spot in Fenghuang, Yandong Village is an ancient hamlet with nearly a thousand years of history, with stone and dirt cottages and wooden houses.

Shanjiang

Located in a glen northwest of Fenghuang, Shanjiang is a small village with authentic Miao traditions and customs. As an old military base, it was also called Zongbingying, the Barracks. There are still many defensive walls and watchtowers in the village.

Laodong Miao Village



One should visit the Miao hamlets around Fenghuang.

Laodong is a well-preserved Miao village in Fenghuang. With 600 years of history, Laodong is a "stone town," with cottages and houses all made of stone. Old traditions of western Hunan Province remain, such as walking corpses – the practice of carrying the deceased back to their home village.

Miaorengu Miao Village

Miaorengu, or Miao's Valley, is a small, traditional village in Shanjiang Town, Fenghuang County flanked by pleasant natural scenery.

Getting to Miao Great Wall:

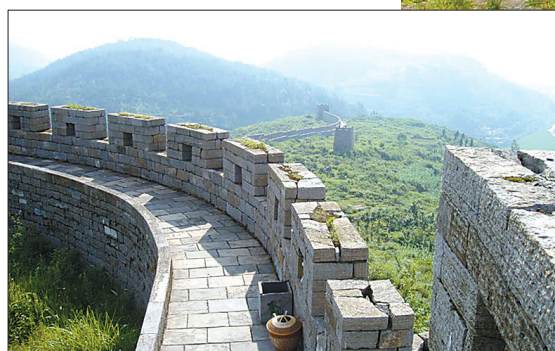
Fly from Beijing to Changsha, which will take about two hours, or take the 13-hour fast train. A bus to Fenghuang County will cost 150 yuan and will take about five and a half hours.

Admission to Miao Great Wall:
45 yuan

Watchtowers in southern Great Wall are more delicate and refined, built with tops resembling southern pavilions.



Inside the Great Wall towers



The southern Great Wall zigzags like a dragon in the mountain, giving off the same imposing manner as its northern cousin.

Photos by Wujun Xiaohan



The Great Wall in Hunan was built to guard against the Miao, once a rebellious minority during the Ming.

Photos by Yang Nan

Airline

British Airways, Iberia merger goes live

The end of January saw the inauguration of International Airlines Group (IAG), a company formed by the merger of British Airways and Iberia, with Willie Walsh as CEO of the new organization. This marks the end of a remarkable 12 months for British Airways with some unprecedented developments that put British Airways back at the forefront of the aviation industry.

Walsh said, "IAG has a great future ahead of it. The first two airlines in the group, British Airways and Iberia, will retain their strong brands and have complementary networks that operate from two of the biggest hubs in Europe. The merger will lead to annual synergies of 400 million Euro from year five and benefit IAG shareholders and British Airways' and Iberia's customers and staff. British Airways and Iberia are the first two airlines in IAG but they won't be the last. Our goal is for more airlines — but, importantly, the right airlines — to join the group. Today is the first step towards creating a multinational multi-brand airline group."



Jetstar reaches across globe with oneworld

Low fares leader Jetstar announced a new fare agreement with members of the leading global airline alliance oneworld, which will allow customers to use flights on the Australia-based airline to acquire oneworld fare products including itinerary combinations such as oneworld Explorer round-the-world and oneworld Circle Pacific, Circle Asia and South West Pacific and Circle Trip Explorer.

Since February 1, Jetstar (JQ) has been operating flights sold under the Qantas codeshare as a oneworld carrier, allowing travel agents around the world to combine these into oneworld itineraries. Qantas codeshares on virtually every Jetstar flight, so this arrangement covers almost the full schedule of Jetstar Australia and New Zealand operations.

The new fare agreement will initially apply to itineraries ticketed by oneworld carriers that have existing interline agreements with Jetstar, including Qantas, American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Japan Airlines, LAN and Royal Jordanian.

Plans are being developed to extend the arrangement to itineraries being ticketed by other oneworld member airlines.

Jetstar already participates in Global Explorer, the round-the-world fare offered by all oneworld partners with a number of other airlines that are not members of the alliance, and also in the alliance's "Visit Australia and New Zealand pass" — but this new development is the first time that any carrier which was not part of oneworld was added to the alliance's own oneworld-branded mainstream fare packages.

Jetstar launches commercial agreement with Finnair

Low fares leader Jetstar has launched an interline agreement with leading European and oneworld carrier, Finnair, further expanding its sales footprint into the European market.

The partnership allows Finnair customers to purchase a Jetstar, Jetstar Asia, Valuair or Jetstar Pacific flight as part of a single integrated transaction and travel itinerary and sold on a Finnair e-ticket.

The agreement follows similar Jetstar Group tie-ups in the past year including Air France / KLM and marks Jetstar's 21st such airline partnership.

Finnair continues to have a significant presence in the travel market between Europe and Asia and in May will recommence daily non-stop flights between Helsinki and Singapore.

Singapore Airlines' 3rd quarter profits up 58 percent

The Group made an operating profit of \$509 million in the third quarter of the 2010-11 financial year, an increase of \$186 million (58 percent) over the same quarter last year.

The group's revenue of \$3.84 billion grew by \$423 million (12 percent) year-on-year, supported by continued improvement in carriage and yields.

On the cost side, group expenditures rose \$237 million (8 percent) to \$3.33 billion. Expenditures on fuel before hedging increased \$154 million due to higher jet fuel prices.

Group net profit for the third quarter was \$288 million, a decline of \$116 million from the corresponding period a year earlier. In the quarter, a \$199 million provision was made in accordance with the Singapore Financial Reporting Standards for fines imposed. While SIA Cargo has accepted the plea offer made by the US Department of Justice, it has filed appeals against fines imposed by the European Commission and the South Korean Fair Trade Commission, and intends to contest these fines. Excluding the fines, the group's net profit grew 21 percent.

Hotel

New manager at Crowne Plaza Zhongguancun

Damir Raab was appointed general manager of Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun. Damir was previously the task force general manager at Crowne Plaza Suzhou, where he led the hotel to become one of the company's top CTP hotels. Prior to that, he was the executive assistant manager of Holiday Inn Beijing Central Plaza and has worked for IHG for the past eight years.

In his leisure time, Damir enjoys motorcycles, squash, golf and spending time with his family.

Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun is located in the heart of Zhongguancun, often referred to as China's Silicon Valley. More than an outstanding location, the hotel offers stylish guest rooms, professional services and extensive meeting and banquet facilities, all within a relaxing ambiance.



Dining



Romantic Valentine's Day at ROOMBeijing

ROOMBeijing has taken on a new look to offer amazing food this Valentine's Day. Take your beloved for a sweet surprise and unforgettable memory.

Special preparations for couples include private rooms with a view of Chang'an Avenue; an extensive Valentine's set menu; Perrier Jouet champagne and red wine; dedicated staff that provides personalized service; and elegant and romantic surroundings.

Where: ROOMBeijing restaurant, west side, Park Life Shopping Center 3F, Beijing Yintai Center, 2 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 14

Cost: 1,998 yuan per couple;
19,999 per private room

Tel: 8517 2033

Email: reservations@room-beijing.com

Valentine's Day special

Express your love this Valentine's Day at Marco Polo Parkside. The Valentine's Day buffet includes a glass of champagne and a rose. Each couple will receive a box of handmade chocolates, a pair of cuddly bunnies and a chance to enter a special lucky draw.

The room package includes two Valentine's Day dinner buffets at Cafe Marco and a night's stay at the hotel's Superior Room.

Where: Marco Polo Parkside, Beijing, 78 Anli Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 14

Cost: Valentine's Day buffet, 368 yuan; room package 999 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 5963 6688 for reservation

Firm info

IDeaS expands China offerings to tap booming hospitality market

IDeaS Revenue Solutions, a leading provider of revenue management software, services and consulting, has established a dedicated business unit for the Greater China region.

In anticipation of continued strong growth across the Greater China region, IDeaS has promoted Allan Taylor to the position of IDeaS' managing director, Greater China — while also realigning the regional corporate structure so that the Greater China's operating region will encompass the mainland, Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The region will report directly to the company's Minneapolis HQ.

"With our clients' continuing expansion and development activities across the region, IDeaS is responding to this and the increased level of Revenue Management adoption from domestic hoteliers," Taylor said.

The IDeaS team will be responsible for all future growth in the region; will have greater direction over sales and operational resources, marketing budgets and activities.

(By Jackie Zhang)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Canary in a cage or coal mine?

By Ammie Wei

The other day I was at Xiu bar with my friends Jack and Larz.

"Hey, there is a very beautiful woman looking at us," Larz said to Jack. "She even pointed us to her friend."

I took a look. "Boys, she is not looking at you two," I informed them. "She was pointing at me, telling her friend that I was a bitch."

Jack and Larz looked confused.

I explained that the beautiful woman was Ally Chou, 27, one of my former roommates and enemies.

Three years ago, Chou moved into my apartment. When I interviewed her as a potential roommate, she struck me as a normal person, a graduate of People's University's economics department and worker at a financial company.

Six months later, I realized she had lied in her interview: she did not graduate from People's University, it was apparent, because her English was horrible. She also proved to be a lousy roommate, always late with rent and constantly inviting friends over late at night for loud chitchat sessions.

Our situation got desperate when she got laid off. Eventually, she began promoting parties at a Sanlitun nightclub, which meant even more late-night carousing.

"She was so cool. She said she made 5,000 yuan at least for hosting a party," Elaine, one of her friends who frequently dropped by our apartment, told me.

Funny, because I happened to overhear that she only made 300 yuan and still owed the DJ money.

The hosting thing lasted only two or three Saturdays because she complained it interfered with her own partying time.

My last straw was her so-called "young and successful" boyfriend, who came every day after work and left at 9 the next morning. I got mad because I never agreed to allow another roommate, to say nothing of one who walked around naked with a pale and lame body.

Ally and I had a big fight and said a lot of mean things to each other.

When I recalled the fight details to Jack and Larz, they couldn't help laughing out loud, especially when Chou said I was bullying her because I was such an old woman who was jealous of her youth, her beauty and her having a man.

"How did you fight back?" Larz asked.

"I said, 'So what? I just don't want you to live in my apartment like a canary in a coal mine,'" I said. "And move out of my apartment ASAP."

"What do you mean, exactly?" the boys look puzzled.

"There is a Chinese saying, 'canary in a cage,' meaning a beautiful woman who cannot make a living but depends on her man."

"But canary in a coal mine does not mean that," Larz said.

"It means a signal." He explained that long ago, miners took a canary into coal mines to detect leaking gas. The canary would fly off if it sensed something unusual.

"Oh," I said. "Next time I'll just say 'whore,' then."

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week

1. One tendency we need to pay attention is this obsession with commercialization.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): We know there is the English phrase "pay attention to." When the phrase is used as an attributive, don't forget the "to," which is absolutely necessary. So, the correct sentence would be: One tendency we need to pay attention to is this obsession with commercialization. I will give you another example: The children I am taking care of will go to a summer camp tomorrow.

Terry Boyd-Zhang (TBZ): Oh, the English prepositions! They are so difficult to learn and so important to include. In speech, they are often glossed over, but in writing they make all the difference between proper English and Chinglish.

2. Home buyers are lining up to pursue an apartment.

ZS: Don't confuse nouns with verbs. The writer here has confused "pursue" with "pursuit." It should be: Home buyers are lining up to pursue an apartment. Similarly, you would not say: We are going to conference with the farmers. Rather, it should be: We are going to confer with the farmers.

TBZ: English has many words where the nouns are very similar to corresponding verbs. This probably comes from the history of the language, like a "chicken and egg" situation. For example: Would "the official" come first? Or would "his or her officiating" create the noun? Then, where does one's "officious behavior" come in?

3. As the birthplace of fireworks, Chinese people have been celebrating with decorative explosives since the Song Dynasty.

ZS: I once put this sentence to one of my students and he could not make out where is the error. It is logic that matters. "Chinese people" is not on par with "birthplace." People are fairly liable to overlook such logic, though it is, as a matter of fact, very important. Let us change it and make it a perfect sentence: The people of China, the birthplace of fireworks, have been celebrating with decorative explosives since the Song Dynasty.

TBZ: I'm not sure how to teach logic. "Logic" appears as a big philosophical word that causes all but the keenest student's eyes to glaze over with incomprehension. Let's use another word like "common sense." Also, in fact, I would make the sentence a bit clearer by changing the clause or pulling out that clause. Instead: As China is the birthplace of fireworks, people have been celebrating... Or, China is the birthplace of fireworks and people have been celebrating... Then they go back to work and look forward to the May holiday!

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Insert to Gain Power

By Terry Boyd-Zhang

Wouldn't it be great if life were that easy? Insert something – your finger, your hand, your... – and all of a sudden you would be filled with strength! Like Clark Kent ducking into a conveniently-located phone booth, or Peter Parker slipping into his red Spidey suit (or should it be the black one?). Or Jafar when the genie he stole from Aladdin grants him Ultimate Power.

"Gaining power" doesn't happen so much in real life, though, does it?

In real life, we tend to "gain weight" more than anything, especially over Spring Festival. (Don't believe it? Check out my husband's recent Weibo photo...) We can "gain time" but usually we lose it. As we get older, we hopefully "gain an understanding," but this isn't guaranteed. Sometimes our ideas "gain a foothold" and our team "gains a victory," but usually, or at least it seems to me, it's all "pain and no gain." (Has anyone seen the

housing prices or the daycare prices or the school fee prices or the food prices in Beijing recently?)

Occasionally, we "gain a rank" and then take two steps back again. Every once in a while we "gain control," but is that equal to gaining power or is it something different? Often, even the power to explain to our boss or our teacher or our parent is beyond our control. Every now and then, the best thing to do is to get away. And when you insert (first character – *cha*) your hotel room card (second character – *ka*) into the slot in order to turn on the electricity (*qudian*) before you vegetate in front of the TV, you can insert yourself under the covers and gain power to simply continue on for another day.

Love and Other Drugs (2010)

Movie of the week

A naked Anne Hathaway and Jake Gyllenhaal may be the most attractive part of *Love and Other Drugs*, despite their regular appearances in on-screen romances.

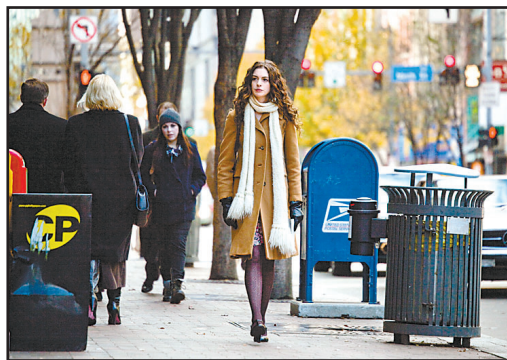
Love and Other Drugs is adapted from Jamie Reidy's bestselling book *Hard Sell: The Evolution of a Viagra Salesman*. Reidy, a Pfizer representative and one of the top men in the industry in the late '90s, gave up his career to work on the book in 2005.

While the original book focused on the dark secrets of the medical industry, the movie appears to be a romance. Hathaway and Gyllenhaal are skilled actors in this typical Hollywood love story, and their appearance may be just enough to keep the viewer from wandering off.

Synopsis

After being fired by an electronics store, former medical student Jamie takes a job as a medical representative. During his work, Jamie meets Maggie Murdock, an artist who suffers from early onset Parkinson's disease. Jamie arranges a date with her, which lasts only 10 minutes before they return to her apartment and have sex.

None of them predicted that their relationship would become closer and closer till they started to fear about the future of their love and responsibility – especially when Maggie's condition stands in the way.



Scene 1

(Jamie is pretending to be an intern at the hospital when he meets Maggie, who he convinced to strip for a breast exam.)

Maggie (M): You're a pharmaceutical representative and you made me take my shirt off?

Jamie (J): Wait! Wait! Wait! I'm hurt. Your buckle hit my eye.

M: No it didn't.

J: I'm hurt ...

M: Oh my God!

J: Who told you I was a drug rep (1)?

M: Look at your bag! I don't think it's going to the airport. Hey, look, just apologize, OK? Just apologize. I never thought I'd get to hear anyone from the medical community apologize!

J: OK, I apologize. I apologize on behalf of all the arrogant, faceless, cutoff (2) doctors out there who treat you like a non-person while peeking at your breast. So what's your name?

M: You're good. Strong eye contact creates intimacy.

J: Let me take you out for a cup of coffee then.

(Maggie takes a photo of Jamie.)

J: What was that?

M: Eat shit and die.

J: Wait, wait a minute. I can make a better apology ...

Scene 2

(Jamie moves to Maggie's department. They talk after Jamie makes a phone call to his mother.)

M: I thought you said it had 1,200 prescriptions.

J: It did.

M: And why did you tell her 2,000?

J: Did I?

M: Are you kidding?

J: I don't know, it just sounded better.

M: You told your mother a lie because it sounds better?

J: Look, she does not know ... she doesn't know numbers (3) ...

M: Do you tell me a lie because it sounds better?

J: No!

M: Then why did you do it with her?

J: Because she wants to know that I'm doing well ...

M: But you are doing well, so ... why do you need to lie to sound even better?

J: OK, you know what? I'll call her back right now and I will correct my mistake.

M: Tell me four good things about yourself.

J: Excuse me?

M: You heard me.

J: OK ... Four good things about me ... I can... Why are we doing this?

M: Well, do you think you are generous? You think you're sweet?

J: Not particularly.

M: Do you think you are smart?

J: Oh my God.

M: Look at you. You're one of those talented, charming and handsome, capable and smart men.

J: I am?

M: Yes, you are.

J: I can juggle.

Scene 3

(The couple breaks up after Maggie's disease makes their future together uncertain, but Jamie soon decides to take Maggie back.)

J: I'm a fool, OK? No, I'm knowingly a fool. Because ... because I have never cared about anybody or anything in my entire life. And the thing is that everybody just kind of accepted that like, "that so is Jamie."

And you ... Jesus ... you didn't see me in that way. I have never known anyone who actually believed that I was enough till I met you. And then you made me believe it too.

So ... unfortunately, I need you. And you need me.

M: No, I don't.

J: Yes you do.

M: No, I don't. Stop saying that.

J: You need someone to take care of you.

M: No, I don't.

J: Everybody does.

M: I mean I need you more than you need me.

J: That's OK.

M: No it's not! It isn't fair. I have to go.

J: Where? I'll carry you.

M: I can't ask you to do that.

J: You didn't. Let's just say that in an alternate universe there is a couple like us. Only that she is healthy, and he is perfect. And their world is only about how much money they spend on vacation or who is in a bad mood that day, or whether she feels guilty to have a cleaning lady ... I don't want to be those people. I want to be us.

Vocabulary

1. drug rep: a representative of a pharmaceutical company

2. cutoff: someone who keeps meetings short

3. to not know numbers: to be poor at basic math

(By Wang Yu)